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TEMPLES, TEXTS, AND NETWORKS

SOUTH INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

Malini Ambach,
Jonas Buchholz,
and Ute Hüsken (Eds.)

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Edited by
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and Ute Hüsken

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Introduction[1]

Malini Ambach, Jonas Buchholz, and Ute Hüsken

For many centuries, Hindu temples and shrines have been of great importance to South Indian religious, social and political life. Aside from being places of worship, they are also pilgrimage destinations, centres of learning, political hotspots, and foci of economic activities. In these temples, not only the human and the divine interact, but they are also meeting places of different members of the communities, be they local or coming from afar. It therefore does not come as a surprise that Hindu temples do not exist in isolation, but stand in multiple relationships to other temples. They relate to each other in terms of architecture, ritual, or mythology, or on a conceptual level when particular sites are grouped together. Especially in urban centres, multiple temples representing different religious traditions may coexist within a shared sacred space.

Extant scholarship has tended to view temples as stand-alone monuments. The current volume sets out to pay more attention to the connections that exist *between* individual Hindu temples and the affiliated communities, be it within a particular place or on a trans-local level. We describe these connections as "temple networks," a concept which instead of stable hierarchies and structures looks at nodal, multi-centred, and fluid systems, in which the connections in numerous fields of interaction are understood as dynamic processes.

Temple Networks

Temple networks can be of different types. A temple network may be constituted by shrines in different places that are grouped together as a concrete, often numbered, set—"connected places" in Feldhaus's (2003) terminology. Such temple networks are imagined or symbolic in so far as they are connected on a purely conceptual level.

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1 This volume is an outcome of the project "Temple Networks in Early Modern South India: Narratives, Rituals, and Material Culture" (Principal Investigators Ute Hüsken and Jonas Buchholz), which was generously funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation)—project number 428328143. The editors wish to thank Prof. Dr. Peter Bisschop (Leiden University), who kindly agreed to review the manuscript of this volume in an open review process, and whose input and criticism helped to improve the diverse contributions to this volume. We also would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Quoc-Bao Do, who competently did the copy-editing and formatting of the manuscript. We thank the team from Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP) for professionally guiding us through the publication process.

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At the same time, however, their connection is real in the sense that it is meaningful for the people who visit the temples, or even peregrinate all sites of a group as a pilgrimage circuit. Well-known examples on a pan-Indian level are the seven "cities of liberation" (*saptamokṣapurī*), which are thought to grant liberation from the cycle of rebirth,[2] or the twelve *jyotirliṅgas*, where Śiva is thought to have manifested himself as a column of light.[3] South India also has its share of regional temple networks. Examples include the five "elemental *liṅgas*" (*pañcabhūtaliṅga*), a group of five Śiva temples in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh,[4] or the six abodes of the god Murukaṉ (*aṟupaṭaivīṭu*) that are spread across Tamil Nadu.[5] Temple networks of this type may also exist on a local level, as the example of the nine Narasiṃhas at Ahobilam shows (see Dębicka-Borek, this volume).

At the same time, the concept of temple networks can also be employed to describe the relations between temples that coexist within a given space, as within a particular city or town. Especially in urban areas, temples rarely stand alone; rather, they form part of a sacred topography that is defined by the presence of numerous temples and shrines, some devoted to the same deity, others belonging to different religious traditions, as well as sacred water bodies. A prime example is the South Indian temple town of Kanchipuram, with which several contributions to this volume (Buchholz, Hüsken, Ambach, Stein) are concerned. Unsurprisingly, competing notions of hierarchy and different definitions of centre and periphery exist in such a situation. Particularly the relations between temples belonging to different religious traditions are often highly dynamic and contested. These relations can be characterized by rivalry, as each tradition tries to assert its primacy and contests competing claims (Hüsken 2017, Schier 2021). Often, however, there is also an element of cohesion, as different religious traditions share a common repertoire of local myths (see Hüsken and Ambach, this volume) and as deities pay visits to each other during temple festivals. Moreover, different traditions that coexist in a religious centre may also cooperate to assert the position of their place in competition with other religious centres.[6] Rivalry constitutes as much a connection as cooperation.

Importantly, the temple networks that are laid out in the texts also authorize pilgrimage practice: the narratives are *walked* or otherwise traveled when pilgrims follow the routes that sages or gods have used before them. In this way, the pilgrims' movements between particular sites actively participate in the establishment of the

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2 The list of these seven cities of liberation most commonly includes Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Varanasi, Kanchi, Ujjain, and Dwaraka (see e.g., *Garuḍapurāṇa* 2.35.5c–6b).

3 See Fleming 2009 and Eck 2012, 189–256.

4 These five temples are in Kanchipuram, Kalahasti, Tiruvanaikkaval, Tiruvannamalai, and Chidambaram (see Eck 2012, 253–256).

5 See Clothey 1978, 116–131.

6 For example, in a narrative given in the thirty-first chapter of the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, the Brahmin Upamanyu travelled to many well-known pilgrimage places, but found *mokṣa* only in Kanchipuram (Hüsken, this volume).

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sacred map (Eck 2012, 5), as they follow the footsteps of mythical travelers imagined in the texts. Clearly, one chief aim of the texts at the centre of this volume, the *sthalamāhātmyas*, was to advertise a site in order to attract devotees: they express the claims of temple priests and local authorities, who depend on the boost of the economy through a steady influx of pilgrims.

Finally, temple networks may also be formed by shrines that are related to each other in terms of ritual or mythology. Temples in different places may share the same myth of origin or particular ritual traditions. Ritual and mythology are often connected since the origins of specific ritual practices are often explained through mythological narratives.[7] Moreover, as Branfoot's contribution in this volume shows, temple networks may also be (re)created as architecture, for example through replicas of particular shrines in other places. Such connections are often also expressed through murals that depict related sites.[8] At the same time, temples that share particular architectural features may create new networks of their own. By including contributions that look at the connections between temples as expressed in different media, this volume opens up new perspectives on temples as "agents" in close connection to and interaction with other sacred sites and actors.

Temple Legends

Most contributions to this volume approach temples and temple networks through textual sources. In this respect, a central resource are the texts that we call "temple legends," corresponding to the class of texts known as *sthalamāhātmya* in Sanskrit and *talapurāṇam* (from Skt. *sthalapurāṇa*) in Tamil. This textual genre is as vast as it is understudied (see Buchholz, this volume).[9] In short, *māhātmyas* can be characterized as texts that glorify a particular subject, in the case of *sthalamāhātmyas* a particular sacred site (an area, a temple, a city, or a river). Such texts were composed both in Sanskrit and in South Indian languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam throughout the second millennium of the common era. A particularly large number of such texts exists in Tamil, with the production of Tamil *talapurāṇams* seeing a major upsurge between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Temple legends describe specific shrines, salvific spaces, and deities and narrate etiological myths accounting for their origins, specifying at the same time local ritual practices. They reflect specific temple networks, and at the same time link local and transregional traditions, often by connecting localized narratives to pan-Indian Purāṇic myths. Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* also typically associate themselves with the transregional

7 Several of the Viṣṇu temples in Kanchipuram are connected through the story of Brahmā's horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedha*). This connection is expressed in the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (see Porcher 1985), in the common perceptions of these Viṣṇus as "brothers," and it is also expressed through the processional routes of the respective deities.

8 See Seastrand 2019; for the Varadarāja temple, see Krishna 2014.

9 See however Shulman's groundbreaking work *Tamil Temple Myths* from 1980.

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Purāṇic tradition by claiming to be part of specific Purāṇas.[10] As such, temple legends form part of a complex textual network.

A further dimension is added by the fact that such texts do not only exist in Sanskrit, but also in local South Indian languages. While the Sanskrit texts and those in local languages are closely intertwined, their relationship is far more complex than what conventional categories such as "translation" or "adaptation" can express, as many of the contributions to this volume show (Buchholz, Ganesan, Sarma, Nachimuthu, Hüsken). Temple legends therefore provide an opportunity to investigate the interaction of Sanskrit and regional literary cultures in early modern South India.

At the same time, the narratives contained in the temple legends are transmitted not only through textual representations, but also through the architecture of the temples, iconographic details, and through murals painted on temple walls – in short, through material expressions of the narratives. Moreover, oral versions of the narratives circulate among the temples' priests, custodians, or local residents, and are retold when pilgrims visit the sites. They may correspond to particular textual versions, but often they contain elements that are not found in any of the textual sources (see Hüsken, this volume). In the case of some temples, mythological narratives are also ritually enacted (see Sarma, this volume). As Dębicka-Borek's contribution to this volume shows (see also Schier 2018; Hüsken 2021), especially temple festivals and other rituals continue to be important means of re-enacting the narratives of the temple legends, both storing them in collective memory and retrieving them from collective memory. These performances provide insight into how the rituals relate to the texts, what meanings are attributed to these practices by different agents, and allow to analyse the adaptation and transformation of narrative and performative motifs by diverse sectarian traditions. Similar to the sometimes radically different interpretations of the basic narratives in the different texts, the ritual performances, and sculptures also tell stories differently, and are moreover often at odds with the textual narratives.

Non-textual expressions of the mythologies thus constitute specific versions of the narrative material, which are also often actively engaged by the contemporary temple custodians along with the oral narratives in the temple (see Hüsken, this volume). Thus, while today the Sanskrit and Tamil texts of the temple legends are rarely consulted by the relevant religious communities, their narratives continue to be transmitted orally among the custodians of the temples, local residents, in an ever-increasing amount of "grey" temple literature (summarizing stories pertaining to the temple), and more recently also on temple websites. These narratives are meaningful

10 Examples for such self-attributions are the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* claiming to be part of the *Skandapurāṇa*, the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, and the *Ahobilamāhātmya*, which all attribute themselves to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, and the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* linking itself to the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* (see the contributions by Buchholz, Hüsken, Ambach, Sarma, and Dębicka-Borek in this volume).

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to both the narrators and pilgrims, as they establish, negotiate, or solidify a network of meaning pertaining to each of the many holy sites.

By applying the concept of networks to describe the fluid relationships between various Hindu temples in a given locality or across different places, and by looking at these networks' representations in different media, this volume takes a first step in opening up new perspectives both on South Indian sacred sites and their religious and ritual traditions.

On the Genesis of the Volume

This volume is an outcome of the workshop "Networks of Temples and Networks of Texts in South India", which was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and conducted from January 20 to January 26, 2020 at the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Pondicherry (figure 1). The workshop concluded with a two-day-long excursion to Kanchipuram, which enabled the participants to visit and explore a number of temples that had been discussed during the workshop (figure 2).

Since the underlying research project "Temple Networks in Early Modern South India: Narratives, Rituals, and Material Culture" focuses on Kanchipuram, special emphasis during the workshop was placed on this particular temple town, yet contributions on other South Indian sites were also invited. The presentations were held in an open format, allowing the presenters to go into detail regarding their material. Many participants chose to read specific textual passages together with the audience. While the majority of the presentations dealt with textual materials, others approached the topic from the perspective of art history. In this way, the participants of this workshop explored diverse temple networks in South India not only through their representation in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Malayalam texts, but also through oral, performative, and material expressions of the textual narratives and through architecture and iconography. This approach is reflected in the diverse contributions to this volume, while the importance placed on primary material is mirrored by the rich appendices to many of the contributions.

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Fig. 1: Session of the workshop "Networks of Temples and Networks of Texts in South India" at the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Pondicherry.

Fig. 2: Visit of the participants at the excursion to Kanchipuram's Aṣṭabhuja temple.

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The Contributions to the Volume

The texts containing temple legends are composed in local languages and in the transregional language of Sanskrit. Here, the texts in local languages, which are clearly locally rooted, display close connections to transregional traditions. At the same time the texts composed in Sanskrit are largely made of locally specific narratives. In "*Sthalamāhātmyas* and *Talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram: A Network of Texts" **Jonas Buchholz** takes a close look at the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmya* and Tamil *talapurāṇam* text corpora that deal with the South Indian temple town of Kanchipuram, its sacred places, and its mythologies. Introducing the range of texts, he reviews their characteristics and explores the texts' contextualisation within their tradition, their relation to Sanskrit and Tamil literary cultures, their religious affiliation, dating, and authorship. In particular, Buchholz focuses on the interrelation between the Sanskrit and Tamil texts, which are closely connected, while promoting their own agenda, with specific priorities and peculiarities.

K. Nachimuthu's "A Survey of the *Sthalapurāṇa* Literature in Tamil" is a comprehensive overview and study of Tamil legends pertaining to sacred places. The first part of this contribution traces the historical development of *talapurāṇam* works and examines various factors shaping the evolution of this literary genre. In the second part, Nachimuthu develops a classification for the several hundred works belonging to the genre of Tamil *talapurāṇams* and examines details of their form and style, their structural characteristics, and narrative elements.

The major agenda of **T. Ganesan**'s contribution "Innovations and Reformulations in Translation: The Case of Some of the *Sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil" is to shed light on the relation between Tamil *talapurāṇams* and Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*. Ganesan closely looks at those *talapurāṇams* and *sthalamāhātmyas* that deal with the sacred sites Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu), Kalahasti (Andhra Pradesh), and Chidambaram (Tamil Nadu), showing how adaptations characterize the Tamil renderings of their Sanskrit counterparts. On the basis of selected narrative motifs, he explores the influence of Tamil literary practices and ideas of the Śaivasiddhānta tradition in shaping the Tamil texts in content and style.

The chapter "Glory of the Tiruvanantapuram Padmanābhasvāmi Temple as Described in the *Māhātmyas*" by **S.A.S. Sarma** deals with the mythology and history of the Vaiṣṇava temple of Padmanābhasvāmi in Tiruvanantapuram (Kerala). Sarma reviews the relevant *māhātmya* texts to detail mythological narratives of the origin of this sacred site, its deity, and particularities of its location, such as sacred water bodies. While doing so, he also points out correspondences between the texts and the temple's architectural features (e.g., the structure of the sanctum) and contemporary ritual practices (e.g., the appointment of priests from a certain region).

Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz & R. Sathyanarayanan explore sacred water bodies and especially the river Kaveri (Karnataka & Tamil Nadu) in their chapter "Importance of Water Bodies in the *Māhātmyas* in the Kāverī Region". Starting from the relevant Sanskrit *māhātmya* texts, they explore the character of the Kaveri as

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depicted in the texts' mythological narratives, and they point out the influence of pan-Indian motifs on the local mythology describing the riverine region and its sacred sites. Moreover, through the study of material aspects of the sites and inscriptions, they discuss the dynamics of the region's ecological characteristics and the local cultural and religious practices in relation to the notion of the Kaveri as sketched in the *māhātmyas*.

Some contributions focus on specific sectarian versions of the temple legends: Even if authored in the same language, temple legends pertaining to one and the same sacred space often are transmitted in several different yet equally valid versions. For, especially potent religious spaces are populated not by one, but by many powerful deities and their temples, which are competing for pilgrims' attention and patronage, and which therefore tend to present their narratives in specific versions that emphasize their own superiority over other deities in town.

Ute Hüsken turns to the Vaiṣṇava Varadarāja temple in Kanchipuram and studies textual, oral, performative, and material aspects of the representation of two lizards in her contribution "Two Lizards in Kanchipuram's Varadarāja Temple." She closely explores the co-existing but competing mythological narratives on the origin of these "golden lizards" from two Sanskrit *māhātmyas* and one Tamil source and discusses the interrelation of the temple's physical space and the narratives. Furthermore, Hüsken examines the integration of elements from popular religiosity pertaining to lizards in the sanskritic religious tradition as reflected in textual accounts and in contemporary ritual practice at the Varadarāja temple.

In her "'Reading' a Sacred Place Differently: Sarvatīrtha in Kanchipuram's Sanskrit *Māhātmyas*" **Malini Ambach** looks into the mythologies of one specific sacred water body, Sarvatīrtha, in Kanchipuram. Ambach focuses on the mythological narratives from three of Kanchipuram's Sanskrit *māhātmya* texts and addresses questions regarding both, the parallel and the diverging particulars of the stories, which reflect the sectarian orientation of the respective texts. She furthermore explores different perspectives on the spatial links of Sarvatīrtha within the city's sacred geographies that are expounded in these *māhātmyas*.

Reflecting a diversity of locally rooted sacred topographies (Feldhaus 2003), temple legends are also closely linked to a diversity of local practices and their underlying aesthetics—describing and prescribing lived religion. As mentioned, some narratives that have come down to us in the form of temple legend texts are also ritually enacted during temple festivals. Such spatial relationships as expressed in texts and performances constitute the focus of **Ewa Dębicka-Borek**'s study "Connected Places, Networks of Shrines: Ahobilam in the Nets of Spatial Relationships." In her contribution, Dębicka-Borek sheds light on networks that link the Vaiṣṇava centre Ahobilam (Andhra Pradesh) to other sacred places in the area and the larger region by way of, among others, a cluster of Narasiṃha shrines and processional enactments of local narratives. She explores the details of a description of the place from the Sanskrit text *Ahobilamāhātmya* and examines the interplay between

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the space as presented by the text, the natural landscape of the area, and the patronage of rulers through the centuries in shaping the notion of Ahobilam.

The narratives found in the texts often can be read also from the iconographic program, and at times they are also expressed in the temple architecture itself. The final two contributions to this volume look at South Indian sacred spaces through architecture and through the lay-out of the town. In "Building Networks: Architecture, Ornament and Place in Early Modern South India", **Crispin Branfoot** explores a choice of architectural and design perspectives on the historical construction of temple networks in fifteenth- to eighteenth-century in Tamil South India. Detailing examples of mural painting and relief sculpture, construction of shrine "replicas," and material traces of festival processions, Branfoot shows how these specifics can constitute a reference from one shrine to one or several other, or associate places with each other, and thus create networks of pilgrimage sites.

The chapter "Grounding the Texts: Kanchi's Urban Logic and Ambitious Extensions" by **Emma Natalya Stein** explores the underlying sacred geography of Kanchipuram, which was formed during the reign of the Chola dynasty and is still detectable in the architectural outline of the present-day city. In particular, Stein shows how the orientation of the temples and shrines throughout the city adheres to a specific pattern in accordance with the sites' location relative to the central road leading through Kanchi. Stein further turns to the urban periphery to examine the influence based on the spatial structures on the build-up of settlements to which the city expanded.

Taken together, the contributions to this volume look at a variety of media in which mythological narratives pertaining to South Indian sacred sites are transmitted and transformed. In this way this volume is able to highlight that these temple legends constitute a rich cultural resource and a unique form of cultural heritage, which is material and intangible at the same time. The temple legends represent and give access to the complex relationship between textual precept and actual practice, between local ("folk") and elite religiosity, and between oral, written and performative transmission. The 2020 workshop and this volume exemplify the benefit of exploring networks of temples through networks of scholars from different disciplines.

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Sthalamāhātmyas and *Talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram: A Network of Texts

Jonas Buchholz (South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University)[1]

The religious landscape of South Asia is dotted with innumerable sites that are considered sacred by the people who visit them (Eck 2012). The stories of these holy places are laid out in a genre of mythological texts known as *sthalamāhātmya* in Sanskrit and *talapurāṇam* (from Skt. *sthalapurāṇa*) in Tamil, which may be characterized as "temple legends." These texts eulogize particular sacred sites and narrate their etiological myths. They were composed on numerous places across the Indian subcontinent both in Sanskrit and in local languages. Temple legends are locally rooted, but at the same time closely connected to the transregional *purāṇas*, thus highlighting the different layers that constitute the pan-Indian Hindu tradition (Lazzaretti 2016).

The South Indian city of Kanchipuram has received a particularly large number of *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams*. Seven such texts, four in Sanskrit and three in Tamil, have been printed, and more exist in manuscript form. The large number of texts on Kanchipuram is partly due to the city's religious importance. Traditionally counted among the seven cities (*saptamokṣapurī*) that are believed to grant liberation (Feldhaus 2003, 128), Kanchipuram is a major Hindu pilgrimage site and has therefore received more attention than many other places. Moreover, Kanchipuram's religious landscape is unusually diverse. Three major traditions of Hinduism—Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Śāktism, represented through the great Ekāmranātha, Varadarāja Perumāḷ, and Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ temples—have for centuries coexisted and competed in the space of this temple town (Hüsken 2017). Each of these traditions has produced their own texts. Finally, texts were composed in two languages: Sanskrit and Tamil. As we will see, the Sanskrit and Tamil texts are closely connected, while also having their own priorities and peculiarities.

With its vibrant temple traditions and its large corpus of texts, Kanchipuram is an excellent point of entry for the study of temple legends. This contribution aims to facilitate such a study by presenting an overview of the Sanskrit and Tamil

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sthalamāhātmyas and *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram. While its main purpose is to simply map the field, it will also address issues that are relevant for the genre of the Hindu temple legend in a more general scope and highlight open research questions.

Sthalamāhātmyas and *Talapurāṇams*

Before we turn to the temple legends of Kanchipuram, a few more general remarks about the genre seem in place. Sanskrit texts dealing with sacred places are representatives of a literary genre known as *māhātmya*, lit. "greatness."[2] *Māhātmyas* are texts that were composed in order to glorify a particular subject. While many *māhātmyas* deal with other topics, for example deities or ritual practices, *māhātmyas* that deal with a particular place, more specifically called *sthalamāhātmyas* (cf. Skt. *sthala*, "place"), are the most numerous specimens of the genre. The number of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* is difficult to estimate. In a preliminary survey, Linda Wiig has counted more than 700 *māhātmyas*, of which, according to her estimate, ninety-five percent deal with places (Wiig 1981, 16). The actual number of texts is probably considerably higher.

Sanskrit *māhātmyas* form part of the vast corpus of Purāṇic literature. The *purāṇas* are a body of voluminous mythological texts in Sanskrit, traditionally divided into eighteen major (*mahā-*) and eighteen minor (*upa-*) *purāṇas*.[3] In their extant form these works are composite texts that contain rather heterogeneous material. Many *purāṇas* include *māhātmyas* on specific topics, often sacred places. Thus, the *Skandapurāṇa* in its well known form that was first printed in 1910 is essentially a collection of *sthalamāhātmyas* (see Rocher 1986, 229-34);[4] it includes, for example, the *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* (on Tiruvannamalai) and the *Setumāhātmya* (on Rameswaram), to name just two examples from the Tamil-speaking region. More numerous however, are *māhātmyas* that claim to form part of a particular *purāṇa*, but which

2 Literature on Sanskrit *māhātmyas* in general is scarce and mostly confined to short overviews in literary histories (e.g. Gonda 1977, 277–283, Rocher 1986, 70–72). Probably the most comprehensive general overview of the *māhātmya* genre is found in an MA thesis by Linda Wiig (1981). A number of publications exists on *māhātmyas* of specific places; see e.g. the contributions in Bakker 1990.

3 For a general introduction to the *purāṇas*, see Rocher 1986, Narayana Rao 2004, and Bailey 2018.

4 The situation regarding the *Skandapurāṇa* is rather complicated. The *Skandapurāṇa* that was published by the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press, Bombay in 1910 (several reprints) has come to be well known and has often been considered 'the' *Skandapurāṇa*. However, there is no evidence that this text ever formed a single whole before it was printed. Only relatively recently, a very early version of the *Skandapurāṇa*, which has almost nothing in common with the *Skandapurāṇa* that was printed in 1910, has been discovered. So far, five volumes of the critical edition of the early *Skandapurāṇa* have been published since 1998, with the work still ongoing. See https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/the-skandapurāṇa-project (accessed Feburary 4, 2022).

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are not actually found in the printed text of the respective *purāṇa*. Indeed, virtually all Sanskrit *māhātmyas* affiliate themselves with a *purāṇa*. The veracity of such claims is difficult to assess due to the nature of the *purāṇas*' transmission. The *purāṇas* have come down to us in numerous vastly divergent recensions, and the printed versions represent only a fragment of the textual material that exists in manuscript form (Rocher 1986, 59–67). It can therefore not be ruled out that a *māhātmya* that claims to form part of a particular *purāṇa* was indeed included in a recension of that *purāṇa* that is different from the printed version. However, given the large number of *sthalamāhātmyas* and their largely local relevance, it seems likely that most of them were transmitted as independent texts. It might be better to see the *sthalamāhātmyas*' claims to belong to specific *purāṇas* as a way of affirming their affiliation with a larger textual tradition.

Māhātmya-like texts were composed not only in Sanskrit, but also in the numerous regional languages of the Indian subcontinent. Perhaps the most substantial body of such texts exists in Tamil, where these texts are called *purāṇam* (from Skt. *purāṇa*), or more specifically *talapurāṇam* (from Skt. *sthalapurāṇa*) if they deal with holy places.[5] The number of Tamil *talapurāṇams* is considerable. Mātavaṉ (1995) has counted almost 400 *talapurāṇams* in verse form (in addition to almost 500 prose *talapurāṇams*).[6] The earliest surviving Tamil *talapurāṇams* are dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the large-scale production of *talapurāṇams* started in the sixteenth century, a period during which the Tamil country saw a major cultural shift with the beginning of Nāyaka rule (Narayana Rao et al. 1992). *Talapurāṇams* continued to be one of the most important genres of Tamil literature until the nineteenth century, before the radical transformation of Tamil literary culture under the influence of colonialism led to the decline of this genre (Ebeling 2010).

Tamil *talapurāṇams* and Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* are intimately connected. As a rule, Tamil *talapurāṇams* claim to be based on a Sanskrit source. Given the ubiquity of such claims, some scholars have been willing to dismiss them as a mere convention (e.g., Harman 1987, Nachimuthu in this volume). Indeed it is possible that Tamil poets may have claimed a Sanskrit source even if there was none, but there is also indication that many Tamil *talapurāṇams* were in fact composed on the basis of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*. For example, we know from U. Vē. Cāmināṭaiyar's biographical account that the nineteenth-century poet Ti. Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815–1876), author of no less than twenty-two *talapurāṇams*, based his works on Sanskrit texts, which he studied with the assistance of Sanskrit scholars (Ebeling 2010, 57). Moreover, many Tamil *talapurāṇams* can be shown to be based on identifiable

5 For an overview of the Tamil *talapurāṇam* genre, see Kiruṣṇacāmi 1974, Shulman 1980, Mātavaṉ 1995, Ramesh 2020, and Nachimuthu in this volume.

6 Kiruṣṇacāmi (1974) lists 581 Tamil *talapurāṇams* but does not sufficiently distinguish between versified and prose texts. Zvelebil's (1975, 248, fn. 68) claim of 2000 *talapurāṇams* is unfounded.

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Sanskrit texts.[7] As we will see, the corpus of Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams* provides ample evidence for this. As such, the temple legends of Tamil Nadu are a prime example for the interaction of Sanskrit and Tamil literary cultures in early modern South India.

Before we move on, a remark on terminology seems in place. Throughout this contribution, I use the term *sthalamāhātmya* when referring to Sanskrit temple legends, and the term *talapurāṇam* when referring to their Tamil equivalents. In Indological literature, the term *sthalapurāṇa* is often also applied to Sanskrit texts, but this usage is not backed up by the texts themselves, which consistently refer to themselves as (*sthala-*)*māhātmyas*, not as *sthalapurāṇas*.[8] Sanskrit *māhātmyas* may claim to form part of a particular *purāṇa*, but they do not normally claim to be a *purāṇa*. By contrast, Tamil texts that deal with holy places are regularly termed *talapurāṇam* (from Skt. *sthalapurāṇa*), or *purāṇam* for short.[9] A telling example are the titles *Kāñcīmāhātmya* and *Kāñcippurāṇam* for the Sanskrit and Tamil temple legends of Kanchipuram, respectively.

In what follows, each of the *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram will be briefly described.

Sanskrit *Sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram

Four Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram exist in printed form. Two of these texts bear the title *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, but apart from their title, they have nothing in common. One of them is of Śaiva and one of Vaiṣṇava affiliation. Therefore, I will refer to these texts as Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(Ś)) and Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(V)), respectively. The other texts are the *Hastigirimāhātmya* (HM), also of Vaiṣṇava orientation, and the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV), which is usually considered a Śākta text (although, as we will see, this characterization might be superficial). In addition, at least two unpublished *sthalamāhātmyas* (possibly related to each other) exist in manuscript form.

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7 The opposite process—Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* being based on Tamil *talapurāṇams*—does not seem to have been common. However, a rare example may be found in the case of two of the temple legends of Madurai, the Sanskrit *Hālāsyamāhātmya* and the Tamil *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* of Nampi (Wilden 2015).

8 The titles of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* most commonly follow the pattern X-*māhātmya*, where "X" is the name of the place with which the text deals. The element *sthala-* is usually omitted in the titles since the place name already implies that the text is concerned with a place.

9 As with Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*, the element *tala-* is usually omitted if the title already includes a place name. That the term *purāṇam* is also applied to *māhātmya*-like texts that deal with other topics than holy places is demonstrated by titles such as *Vināyakapurāṇam* (on the god Vināyaka or Gaṇeśa) or *Civarāttiripurāṇam* (on the Śivarātri festival).

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The *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (Śaiva) (KM(Ś))

The most voluminous of the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram is the KM(Ś), which contains about 4700 verses divided into fifty chapters. Also known under the alternative title *Kāñcīsthānamāhātmya*,[10] this text claims to form part of the *Kāḷikākhaṇḍa* in the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* (or the *Śaṅkarasaṃhitā*) of the *Skandapurāṇa*.[11] The KM(Ś) is available through two printed editions, one published in Karvetinagaram in 1889 and one in Vijayawada in 1967, both in Telugu script.

The KM(Ś) describes Kanchipuram's sacred space from a Śaiva perspective. After the frame story and a section that eulogizes Kanchipuram in general terms, the larger part of the text, from chapter 4 to chapter 45, narrates the myths of various Śiva temples in and around Kanchipuram. There is no room here to describe the temple network that is outlined in the KM(Ś) in detail, but it shall suffice to say that the text deals with more than one hundred Śiva temples in Kanchipuram and its surroundings, most of which can be identified with temples that still exist in Kanchipuram's cityscape. The sequence in which the sites are mentioned in the KM(Ś) is roughly geographical, in the main following an east-to-west trajectory, and culminates with the Ekāmranātha temple, which receives more ample space than any of the other sites (chapters 36 to 45). The main myth of the Ekāmranātha temple, which has been studied by Kerstin Schier (2018), is central for the Śaiva traditions of Kanchipuram and can be summarized as follows: to expiate a sin that she had committed by covering Śiva's eyes on Mount Kailāsa, the goddess Kāmākṣī (the local manifestation of Śiva's wife Pārvatī) goes to Kanchipuram, where she performs austerities on the banks of the Kampā river and builds a *liṅga* from sand under a mango tree.[12] When Śiva sends a flood to test her devotion, Kāmākṣī embraces the *liṅga* to protect it against the flood. Pleased by Kāmākṣī's devotion, Śiva agrees to marry her in Kanchipuram. In the KM(Ś) this myth is told in great detail over the course of seven chapters (39 to 45). The following and last five chapters of the

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10 The title page of the printed text gives the title as *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, but the chapter-ending colophons refer to the text as *Kāñcīsthānamāhātmya*.

11 In slightly more than half of the chapters, the chapter-ending colophon ascribes the text to the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* of the *Skandapurāṇa*, but in the others we find *Śaṅkarasaṃhitā* instead of *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*. While the *Skandapurāṇa* as it was printed in 1910 is divided into seven *khaṇḍas*, a different subdivision into six *saṃhitās*, which in turn are divided into fifty *khaṇḍas*, is known from texts that claim to belong to the *Skandapurāṇa* (Rocher 1986, 234–237).

12 The myth not only explains the name Ekāmranātha, "lord of the single mango tree," but also accounts for the origin of the two divine symbols that stand in the focus of worship in the Ekāmranātha temple: the *liṅga* in the main shrine and a sacred mango tree that is situated in a *prākāra* behind it. The main *liṅga* of the Ekāmranātha temple is said to be made of sand. As such, the Ekāmranātha temple represents the element of earth among the "five elemental sites" (*pañcabhūtasthala*), a group of five temples in South India where Śiva is thought to manifest himself in the form of one of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether). See Schier 2018, 24–27.

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KM(Ś) (chapters 46 to 50) deal with miscellaneous matters, including rules of conduct and the rewards that can be earned through various pious deeds.

The *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (Vaiṣṇava) (KM(V))

The next *sthalamāhātmya* of Kanchipuram is the KM(V), which comprises around 2300 verses in thirty-two chapters and claims to belong to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. The only printed edition of the text was published in Kanchipuram in 1906. While the title of the text is given as *Kāñcīmāhātmya* in the printed edition, in the manuscripts, the text is designated with the alternative title *Kāñcīkṣetramāhātmya*.

The KM(V) has a distinctly Vaiṣṇava orientation. Its narrative structure has been discussed at length by Marie-Claude Porcher (1985). As Porcher has shown, the narrative of the KM(V) is structured along a temporal and a spatial axis, the former represented by four successive *avatāras* of Viṣṇu—Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, and Kṛṣṇa—and the latter by a shift from the south-eastern to the north-western part of Kanchipuram.[13] After the frame story (chapter 1), the KM(V) begins with the Purāṇic myths of Varāha and Narasiṃha (chapters 2 and 3). These myths are localized in Kanchipuram by mentioning a cave which Varāha dug out at the foot of the Hastigiri (or Hastiśaila) hill and in which Narasiṃha later took residence.[14] Here the Hastigiri hill represents the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple, while the cave stands for the Narasiṃha shrine within this temple.[15] By introducing the Hastigiri hill, the stage is set for the foundational myth of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple. After an intermezzo dealing with the praise of Kanchipuram (chapter 4) and the city's various sacred waterbodies (*tīrthas*) (chapters 5 to 8), the KM(V) devotes chapters 9 to 17 to this central myth, which can be summarized as follows: desiring to see Viṣṇu, the god Brahmā performs a horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) on the Hastigiri hill in Kanchipuram. However, Viṣṇu has to intervene in different forms to fight the demons (*asuras*) who try to stop Brahmā's sacrifice and to halt Brahmā's wife Sarasvatī, who, incited by the demons, rushes towards Kanchipuram in the form of a torrential river. These episodes explain the origin of several other Viṣṇu temples in the south-

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13 The south-eastern part of Kanchipuram houses the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple as well as a number of other Viṣṇu temples and is therefore today known as *Viṣṇu Kāñci* (or *Ciṉṉa Kāñci*, "Little Kanchi"). Conversely, the north-western part of the city, which houses the Ekāmranātha and Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ temples, is known as *Śiva Kāñci* (or *Periya Kāñci*, "Big Kanchi"). However, there are also a number of Viṣṇu temples in Śiva Kāñci (and Śiva temples in Viṣṇu Kāñci), and the KM(V) makes a point of describing both parts of Kanchipuram as Viṣṇu's realm.

14 The Narasiṃha myth also connects Kanchipuram with two other places, Ahobilam and Ghaṭikādri (Sholingur), both of which have important temples for Narasiṃha. According to the KM(V), Narasiṃha killed the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu in Ahobilam and made a stopover in Ghaṭikādri on his way back to Kanchipuram. See Dębicka-Borek 2019.

15 The unusual elevated main shrine of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple is conceived as a hill. The Narasiṃha shrine is found on the lower level of the main shrine, that is, at the foot of the "hill." See Raman 1975, 44–45.

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eastern part of Kanchipuram (Dīpraprakāśa Perumāḷ, Aṣṭabhuja Perumāḷ, and Yathoktakārī Perumāḷ), as well as of the river Vegavatī, which runs through the city. Finally, Brahmā can complete his sacrifice, prompting Viṣṇu to appear from the sacrificial fire as Varadarāja Perumāḷ.

The second part of the KM(V) deals with the Viṣṇu temples in the north-western part of Kanchipuram. In chapters 18 to 22, the KM(V) narrates the myth of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* Vāmana, localized in Kanchipuram's Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ temple. In this context, the KM(V) also deals with the presence of Śiva and the Goddess in Kanchipuram: chapters 23 to 25 contain a version of the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth, which is given a distinctly Vaiṣṇava outlook by presenting Vāmana as the cause of the events (Schier 2018, 88–90). Closely connected to the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth is the story of Gaṅgā (told in chapters 26 and 27), who comes to Kanchipuram after she has been cursed by Kāmākṣī (see Ambach in this volume). The KM(V) relates that Viṣṇu freed Gaṅgā from her curse and promised to show himself to her each year at a particular date, thus explaining the existence of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple's annual temple festival (*brahmotsava*).[16] Chapter 28 further deals with the *brahmotsava* as Viṣṇu instructs Brahmā how the festival should be carried out. Chapter 29 then moves to another *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, and gives the foundational myth of the Pāṇḍavadūta Perumāḷ temple. Chapter 30 relates the story of the Kailāsanātha and Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ temples (the former dedicated to Śiva, the latter to Viṣṇu). This is followed by the two final chapters (31 and 32), which, as Ute Hüsken argues (in this volume), appear like late additions to the text. Chapter 31 tells the origin legend of the "golden lizards," a high relief of two lizards in the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple, which draws the attention of many temple visitors (Hüsken in this volume). Chapter 32, finally, deals with the origin of the Palar river and three Śiva temples.

While dealing with the same city and partly sharing the same repertoire of myths, the KM(Ś) and KM(V) differ in their sectarian outlook by placing their respective deity (Śiva or Viṣṇu) at the top of the divine hierarchy. Thus, the KM(V) contains a version of Kanchipuram's main Śaiva myth, the story of Kāmākṣī and Ekāmranātha, but reinterprets it from a Vaiṣṇava perspective. Similarly, the KM(Ś) (in its chapter 7) also includes the story of Brahmā's sacrifice, the central Vaiṣṇava myth of Kanchipuram, but presents Śiva as the superior deity by depicting him as the cause of the events.[17] With their variegated treatment of a common stock of narrative motifs, the KM(Ś) and the KM(V) show how mythological texts could be used to negotiate contested religious hierarchies.

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16 On the festival, see Hüsken 2013.

17 The story of Brahmā's sacrifice is included in the foundational myth of the Śivāsthāneśvara (today known as Brahmapurīśvara) temple, which is said to have been established by Brahmā before he commenced his sacrifice. In the version of the KM(Ś), Śiva not only enables Brahmā to perform his sacrifice, but also instructs Viṣṇu to protect it against Sarasvatī's assault.

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The *Hastigirimāhātmya* (HM)

Another Vaiṣṇava *sthalamāhātmya* of Kanchipuram exists in the form of the HM. This text comprises around 1600 verses in eighteen chapters and is ascribed either to the *Brahmapurāṇa* or to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.[18] The HM is available through multiple printed editions as well as through a large number of manuscripts. An edition of the HM in Grantha script, containing a commentary in Maṇipravāḷam (Sanskritized Tamil), was published in Kanchipuram in 1898.[19] Moreover there is an undated early edition in Telugu script with a Telugu commentary.[20] Another Grantha edition with Maṇipravāḷam commentary was published in Kanchipuram in 1971.[21] Finally, an edition in Devanagari script with a summary in Tamil and English was published in Chennai in 2006. Remarkably, far more manuscripts of the HM exist than of any other *sthalamāhātmya* of Kanchipuram. So far, I have been able to identify thirty-six such manuscripts. Several of them contain commentaries in Tamil and in one case even in Kannada.[22]

The title of the HM refers to the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple, which, as we have seen, is known under the mythological name *Hastigiri* ("elephant hill").[23] The largest part of the text (chapters 1 to 10) is devoted to the foundational myth of this temple. A detailed comparison of the versions of the myth found in the HM and the KM(V) is beyond the scope of this contribution, but the general outline of the story seems to be similar. Both texts deal with Brahmā's *aśvamedha*, the demons' attempt to stop the sacrifice, Sarasvatī's appearance as a river, and Viṣṇu's manifestation as Varadarāja Perumāḷ. However, the HM omits the ramifications of the story that account for the presence of other forms of Viṣṇu in Kanchipuram. Also elsewhere in the text, none of the city's other Viṣṇu temples is mentioned. Rather, the largest part of the second half of the HM (chapters 11 to 17) tells the stories of various mythical characters (the elephant Gajendra, the sage Bṛhaspati, and the snake Ananta) who are said to have worshipped Varadarāja Perumāḷ during successive *yugas*, while the last chapter contains a somewhat disjointed exposition of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* system.

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18 In the printed editions, the HM is attributed to the *Brahmapurāṇa*, but in a part of the manuscripts, it is instead ascribed to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.

19 A copy of this edition is held by the Cologne University Library, but so far, I have only been able to see its title page, which has been digitized as a part of Cologne's Digital Collection of Grantha and Telugu prints (http://www.ub.uni-koeln.de/cdm/ref/collection/grantha/id/1030).

20 Since the digital copy at my disposal is lacking the title page, I cannot say where and when this edition was published.

21 Possibly the commentary is the same as in the 1898 edition of the HM, but I could not verify this since I have not been able to access that edition.

22 The content of these commentaries remains to be investigated, but at least the commentary in the manuscript R.1941, held by the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library (GOML) in Chennai, appears to partly correspond to the Maṇipravāḷam commentary in the 1971 edition of the HM.

23 On the name *Hastigiri*, see Hüsken in this volume.

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Thus, while both the KM(V) and the HM describe Kanchipuram from a Vaiṣṇava perspective, the HM is rather exclusively focussed on the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple.

Although the HM has received little scholarly attention, it appears to have been an extremely popular text, as is evidenced by the large number of manuscripts and editions and the existence of commentaries in multiple languages. At least partly, the popularity of the HM might have been due to the role that the text plays in the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple's ritual practice. To this day, the HM is recited in front of the deity during the yearly *pallavotsava* festival, and its central scene, Varadarāja's appearance from the sacrificial fire, is ritually enacted.[24]

The HM is not to be confused with the Tamil *Hastigirimāhātmya*, composed by the famous Śrīvaiṣṇava author Vedāntadeśika (ca. 1268–1369), which will be discussed below. However, as we will see, Vedāntadeśika quotes the Sanskrit HM in the auto-commentary on his work. These quotations are significant as they establish a *terminus ante quem* for the Sanskrit HM: unless the quotations in the commentary are later interpolations, they prove that the HM must have been composed before Vedāntadeśika's time, that is, before the fourteenth century.

The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV)

The fourth Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmya* of Kanchipuram is the KV, which comprises around 1400 verses in fourteen chapters and claims to belong to the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*.[25] The first edition of the KV, in Telugu script, was published in Karvetinagaram in 1889 (as was the first edition of the KM(Ś)). Another edition of the KV in Devanagari script was published in Bangalore in 1968. Remarkably, I have so far been able to detect only a single manuscript of the KV.[26]

The title *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* suggests that the text is primarily concerned with the goddess Kāmākṣī. However, in addition to chapters with a clear Śākta orientation,

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24 Personal communication by Ute Hüsken, who has witnessed and documented this festival several times between 2004 and 2008.

25 As Schier (2018, 85) points out, the fact that the KV ascribes itself to the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* indicates its Śākta orientation since the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* also includes the *Devīmāhātmya*, a text that is central for the worship of the Goddess.

26 The manuscript in question is the manuscript no. 2519 held by the Oriental Research Institute in Mysore. I have so far not been able to see this manuscript, but according to the catalogues (Anonymous 1922, 180; Marulasiddaiah 1981, 300) it is a palm-leaf manuscript in Grantha script that contains the *Kāmākṣīmāhātmya* (presumably an alternative title of the KV) from the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*. Apart from this manuscript, the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* (Raghavan 1967, 361) reports two manuscripts titled *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*, one found in the collection of the India Office Library (today held by the British Library in London), and one from a private collection reported by Oppert (1885, 510). However, the former contains a different text, namely a part of the *Lalitopākhyāna* from the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* (see Eggeling 1899, 941). The latter is (perhaps wrongly?) classified as a *kāvya* in the catalogue. In any case, its whereabouts are unknown.

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the KV also contains ample Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava material. The first chapter of the KV is devoted to a description of Kanchipuram's sacred area (*kṣetra*) and to the glorification of Kāmākṣī. The rest of the text, however, successively deals with three overlapping *kṣetras* within Kanchipuram, consecrated to Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the Goddess, respectively: chapters 2 to 5 describe Viṣṇu's *kṣetra* and the myths of Hastigiri (i.e., the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple), chapters 6 to 9 deal with Śiva's *kṣetra* and the mythology of the Ekāmranātha temple, and chapters 10 to 14 describe the Goddess's *kṣetra* and myths associated with the Kāmākṣī temple. In addition to its Śākta core, the KV thus also has sections with a clear Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava focus. As Malini Ambach (in this volume) points out, these sections present Śiva and Viṣṇu respectively as the highest deity, rather than simply retelling Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava myths from a Śākta perspective. The sectarian orientation of the KV is therefore less clear-cut than that of the other *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram.

It is worth noting that R. Nagaswamy (1982, 207–208) has argued that the KV must be a very late work, possibly composed at the time of the first printed edition in 1889, because it refers to very recent structures in the Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ temple. Unfortunately, Nagaswamy does not tell us which passages of the KV he refers to, which makes it difficult to assess the strength of his argument. However, the fact that only a single manuscript of the KV can be found might indeed speak in favour of a late date of the text. Further research on the KV might provide more insights about this text's genesis.

Unpublished Sanskrit Texts

Apart from the printed texts, further *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram exist in manuscript form. One such text is found in the manuscript RE 30590, a palm-leaf manuscript in Grantha script held by the Institut Français de Pondichéry (IFP) in Pondicherry (henceforth "Pondicherry manuscript"). The text that is contained in this manuscript is identified in the colophons as the *Kāñcīsthānamāhātmya* from the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and comprises twenty chapters with an estimated 1000 verses.[27] Many leaves are broken, but otherwise the manuscript is mostly legible. Based on my preliminary investigation, the first chapter of the text contains a frame story that involves a dialogue between Brahmā and his son Sanatkumāra and a section in which Brahmā expounds the greatness of Kanchipuram to Sanatkumāra (fol. 1r–4v). This is followed by what appears to be an account of the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth (chapters 2 to 12, fol. 4v–35r), a section relating the origin stories of the Palar and Cheyyar rivers as well as of several Śiva temples in and around Kanchipuram (chapters 13 to 15, fol. 35v–45v), and a mythical account of the kings who ruled over Kanchipuram (chapters 16 to 20, fol. 45v–66v). This text is different from all printed *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram and has so far not been published.

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27 The manuscript contains sixty-six folios, each of which contains about sixteen verses on average.

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Another previously unpublished *sthalamāhātmya* of Kanchipuram seems to be contained in the manuscript Mackenzie III.21a, a palm-leaf manuscript in Telugu script that is held by the British Library in London (henceforth "London manuscript"). I have so far not been able to see this manuscript, but according to the description in the catalogue (Eggeling 1899, 1040), it contains the "*Kāñcīsthānamāhātmya* from the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇasaṃgraha* and the *Sarvapurāṇasaṃgraha*" and breaks off in chapter 98. The beginning of the text, which is given in the catalogue, does not correspond to any of the printed *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram, nor to the beginning of the text in the Pondicherry manuscript. However, it seems possible that the same text as in the London manuscript is also contained in the manuscript no. 4086 held by the Oriental Research Institute (ORI) in Mysore (henceforth "Mysore manuscript"). I have not been able to see this manuscript either, but according to the catalogues (Anonymous 1922, 180, Marulasiddaiah 1981, 406), it is a palm-leaf manuscript in Grantha script that contains the "*Kāñcīmāhātmya* from the *Purāṇasaṃgraha*" in ninety-seven chapters. Unfortunately, the catalogues do not give any excerpts, which makes it difficult to say if the text is the same as in the London manuscript, but the alleged source and the number of chapters are similar enough to suspect that we might be dealing with the same text. I hope to be able to say more after having accessed the manuscripts.

As we will see, these unpublished *sthalamāhātmyas* are noteworthy because of their relation to the second book of the Tamil *Kāñcippurāṇam*. As I will show below, it is possible that the second book of the *Kāñcippurāṇam* is based on the Sanskrit text contained in the London and Mysore manuscripts (assuming that these two manuscripts indeed contain the same text), while this text, for its part, seems to have been compiled from different sources, one of which might have been the text contained in the Pondicherry manuscript. This would mean that the London and Mysore manuscripts contain partly the same textual material as the Pondicherry manuscript. We will return to this somewhat complicated issue in the section on the second book of the *Kāñcippurāṇam*. Before we turn to the Tamil *talapurāṇams*, however, we need to consider a few more issues concerning the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*.

Authorship, Dating, and Textual History

A defining feature of Purāṇic texts in Sanskrit is their dialogical structure. The texts are invariably framed as dialogues between an interlocutor and a respondent and may contain several narrative layers nested within each other. This is also true for the *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram. Both the KM(Ś) and the KM(V) begin with a dialogue between Sūta, the mythical narrator of the *purāṇas*, and the sages who have assembled in the Naimiśa forest.[28] Into this frame story, further narrative layers are embedded: in the KM(V), Sūta relates a dialogue between the king Ambarīṣa and the sage Nārada, which forms the main narrative frame. In the KM(Ś), Sūta first recounts

28 On the Naimiśa (or Naimiṣa) forest, see Hiltebeitel 1998.

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a dialogue between the primordial sage Sanatkumāra and Nandī, Śiva's bull and foremost devotee, which leads up to Nandī relating a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī. After this, we briefly return to the Naimiśa forest, where Sūta continues by retelling a dialogue that once took place between the sage Kauśika and the Brahmin residents of Kanchipuram. This dialogue forms the narrative frame for the largest part of the text. In contrast to the KM(Ś) and KM(V), the HM and the KV omit the first level of the frame story and start *in medias res*, with a dialogue between the sages Bhṛgu and Nārada in the case of the HM and a dialogue between the king Suratha and the sage Mārkaṇḍeya in the case of the KV. Similarly, the unpublished text that is contained in the Pondicherry manuscript is framed as a dialogue between Brahmā and Sanatkumāra. All these narrative frameworks have in common that the texts are put into the mouths of mythical sages and deities. This renders them as timeless revelation, but it also means that the texts present us with no information about their human authors. The highly formulaic diction of Purāṇic literature further obliterates any traces of individual authorship. All of this means that *māhātmyas* are effectively authorless texts, which are therefore very difficult to date.

As far as the date of the *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram is concerned, Kerstin Schier (2018, 74–75) believes that these texts "probably were not composed prior to the sixteenth century," which she justifies by the fact that the golden age of the composition of Tamil *talapurāṇams* began in said century. However, as her argument is based on Tamil *talapurāṇams*, it does not seem very convincing in the case of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*. As for the date of the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Tamil Nadu in general, all we know is that the genre as such must be "somewhat older" (Shulman 1980, 32) than its Tamil counterpart, for Tamil *talapurāṇams* are often based on Sanskrit models, but exactly how much older is unclear. At the same time, one can assume that Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* continued to be composed even after the large-scale production of Tamil *talapurāṇams* had begun. Therefore, neither an earlier or a later date for the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram can be ruled out. In the case of the HM, as we have seen, the quotations by Vedāntadeśika point to a date before the fourteenth century.

Given the scarcity of external information, the only way to date the *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram would seem to be on text-internal grounds, for example if the texts mention particular, dateable structures. However, this approach also does not seem to lead very far. Firstly, even if a temple that is mentioned in a particular text can be dated to a particular century, this does not necessarily mean that the text was composed after this date, for it is always possible that the present temple was preceded by another structure, of which no traces remain. Secondly, since the texts are concerned with the mythical, rather than with the worldly realm, they rarely describe architectural details of the sites with which they are concerned, and if they do, they do it in a highly idealized way that does not allow any conclusions to dateable architectural features. For example, the KM(Ś) describes the Ekāmranātha temple as "surrounded by golden walls that are bedecked with multitudes of various jewels"

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(*nānāmaṇigaṇākīrṇahemaprākārasaṃvṛtam*) (KM(Ś) 42.19a–b) and as "adorned with *gopuras* (gateway towers) that compete [in height] with the Kailāsa and Mandara mountains" (*kailāsamandaraspardhigopurair upaśobhitam*) (KM(Ś) 42.20c–d). Perhaps this suggests that the Ekāmranātha temple had *gopuras* at the time of the text's composition, but it could also simply mean that whoever composed the text conceived of an ideal temple as possessing tall *gopuras*. This means that the text—or this particular passage of the text—must have been composed at a time when *gopuras* had become a prominent feature of Tamil temple architecture, that is sometime after the twelfth century (Branfoot 2015). This already gives some kind of indication of the text's age, but it does not allow to date it with more precision. More specifically, it does not seem possible to link the passage in question with any particular, dateable *gopura* of the Ekāmranātha temple, *pace* Schier (2018, 75, fn. 5), who claims that the KM(Ś) "mentions the *gopura* of the Ekāmranātha temple, which has been built in the sixteenth century or later."[29] It remains to be seen if a careful study of Kanchipuram's Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* will bring to light more text-internal clues that could help dating them, but for the time being, the question of the texts' dates must be left open.

Another problem is posed by the fluid nature of Purāṇic texts in Sanskrit. Such texts often exist in multiple widely divergent recensions. This is due to a process that Hans Bakker (1989) has termed "composition in transmission": since individual authorship was not a relevant category in the case of these texts, the people who transmitted them felt authorized to change, add, or delete text material while they were copying them. The *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram appear to have been no exception to this phenomenon. Kerstin Schier (2018, 82) has already noted that the KM(Ś) contains a number of narrative inconsistencies, which give the impression that the text was not composed by a single author. Moreover, as also noted by Schier (2018, 86), the KM(Ś) and the KV have some text passages in common. These findings suggest that the *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram as we have them today contain different text layers, which may have accrued in the course of time, or which may have been compiled from different sources. These findings are confirmed through an investigation of three manuscripts of the KM(Ś) from the collection of the Institut Français de Pondichéry (IFP), which I could access in digitized form. One of these manuscripts (RE 30565) is rather close to the text that is found in the printed editions, whereas the two others (RE 30550 and RE 39684) represent a different recension, which differs considerably from the printed text. Apart from numerous variants that concern individual words or phrases, entire sections of the text, dealing with particular temples, are missing in these manuscripts. Thus, while the printed editions reduce the *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram to a single version, the

29 The Rājagopura, the tallest of the Ekāmranātha temple's *gopuras*, was indeed constructed during the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, Schier does not specify which passage of the KM(Ś) she refers to, but I could not find any passage in the text that would seem to refer specifically to the Rājagopura, rather than to any other *gopura*.

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manuscripts of the texts appear to transmit various divergent recensions. A more detailed investigation of the textual history of Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmyas* therefore seems highly worthwhile in order to understand the dynamics that were at play in the transmission of these texts.

Tamil *Talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram

Turning to the Tamil *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram, two such texts, both titled *Kāñcippurāṇam*, exist. The first of them was composed by the two authors Civañāṉa Muṉivar and Kacciyappa Muṉivar during the second half of the eighteenth century and the other one, which is also known as the "Old *Kāñcippurāṇam*," by the author Kaccālaiyar at an unknown date. However, as we will see, the works of Civañāṉa Muṉivar and Kacciyappa Muṉivar, while framed as two books of the same text, are, in fact, independent compositions, which could also be considered separate texts. In what follows, I will refer to Civañāṉa Muṉivar's and Kacciyappa Muṉivar's work simply as *Kāñcippurāṇam* (KP), specifying the book wherever necessary, and to Kaccālaiyar's text as "Old *Kāñcippurāṇam*" (KP(O)). In addition to these texts, I will also revisit the *Hastigirimāhātmya* of Vedāntadeśika (HM(V)), which as we will see, is not a *talapurāṇam* in the strict sense, but which is closely connected with the Vaiṣṇava *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram, and a number of prose versions of Kanchipuram's *talapurāṇams*.[30]

The *Kāñcippurāṇam* (KP)

The KP comprises two books (*kāṇṭam*), the first composed by Civañāṉa Muṉivar and the second by Kacciyappa Muṉivar. Unlike with the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*, the authors of Tamil *talapurāṇams* are usually known by name, and in the case of the KP, we are in the lucky position to have quite a bit of historical information about the text's two authors. Civañāṉa Muṉivar (d. 1785), who composed the first book, was one of the most important Tamil intellectuals of his time and a Śaiva monk in the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṉam, an influential non-Brahmin monastery (*maṭha*) located in the Kaveri delta region in central Tamil Nadu.[31] Born to a Śaiva family of the Vēḷāḷar caste, a prominent landowning community, in Vikkiramaciṅkapuram near Tirunelveli in southern Tamil Nadu, he joined the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṉam at a young age. In Tiruvāvaṭuturai, Civañāṉa Muṉivar was trained in Tamil, Sanskrit, and Śaiva

30 Apart from the texts discussed here, a rather obscure work with the title *Kāñcippurāṇakkalitturai* also exists. This text, whose author and date are unknown, comprises 212 verses in the eponymous *kalitturai* meter and is available through a rare edition published in 1927. Two further texts are mentioned by Kamil Zvelebil (1995, 322): an "Old *Kāñcippurāṇam*" by Piratāpa Mutaliyār and a *Kāñci Makattuvam* by Naracimmalu Nāyuṭu. However, I have not been able to locate these texts.

31 On the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṉam, see Koppedrayer 1990.

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Siddhānta philosophy and soon became an eminent scholar. He is best known for his commentaries on Śaiva Siddhānta treatises, but as a versatile author, he also produced grammatical commentaries, translations of Sanskrit religio-philosophical works, scholarly polemics, as well as poetic texts. In addition to the first book of the KP (his only *talapurāṇam*), Civañāṉa Muṉivar composed around a dozen shorter works of devotional poetry.[32]

Kacciyappa Muṉivar (d. 1790), the author of the second book of the KP, was Civañāṉa Muṉivar's student. He was born to a Śaiva Vēḷāḷar family in Tiruttaṇi in northern Tamil Nadu and also became a monk in the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṉam. Unlike his teacher, Kacciyappa Muṉivar seems to have concentrated on poetic compositions and became a prolific author of *talapurāṇams*. In addition to the second book of the KP, he composed four more *talapurāṇams* (*Tiruvāṉaikkāppurāṇam*, *Pūvaḷūrppurāṇam*, *Pērūrppurāṇam*, and *Taṇikaippurāṇam*), as well as a *purāṇam* on the god Gaṇeśa (*Vināyakapurāṇam*) and a number of shorter works.[33]

The two books of the KP are self-contained compositions, which, as we will see, are based on two different Sanskrit sources. The first book, composed by Civañāṉa Muṉivar, comprises sixty-seven chapters with a total of 2742 verses, and the second book, composed by Kacciyappa Muṉivar, 2113 verses divided over eight chapters.[34] In this respect, it is important to note that the number of verses in the Tamil and Sanskrit texts cannot be directly compared. The KP, like other Tamil *talapurāṇams*, employs a variety of complex metres, which are much longer than the *anuṣṭubh* verses found in the Sanskrit *māhātmyas*. On average, one Tamil verse can be said to correspond to approximately two Sanskrit verses. With a combined length of 4855 verses, the two books of the KP thus constitute a very voluminous work.

The KP is commonly considered one of the most important Tamil *purāṇams* (Zvelebil 1974, 172). Its popularity is mirrored by the large number of printed editions: since the *editio princeps* of 1878, at least nine editions of the KP, some containing only one of the two books or parts thereof, have been published (see the bibliography for details). Many of these editions contain elaborate commentaries and lavish illustrations. Till this day, the KP is considered an authoritative text for the Śaiva traditions of Kanchipuram. The summaries of the myths of Kanchipuram's temples that are found in popular pamphlets (e.g., Vijayakumār 2014) or on

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32 On Civañāṉa Muṉivar's biography and works, see Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai 1955, Cāmi Aiyā 1989, 11–39, and the biographical sketch that is found in the prefaces of the 1878, 1900, and 1910 editions of the KP.

33 On Kacciyappa Muṉivar's biography, see the biographical sketch that his found in the prefaces of the 1883 edition of the *Taṇikaippurāṇam* and the 1884 edition of the *Pērūrppurāṇam*. This biographical sketch seems to be the source for the information found in Zvelebil 1995, 300–301.

34 The numbering of the chapters may differ depending on whether or not the prefatory section (*pāyiram*) is included in the chapter count. I follow Dessigane et al. 1964 in counting the *pāyiram* as chapter number 1.

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signboards in the temples themselves are based on the narratives found in the KP and often explicitly refer to the KP as their source. However, it is almost exclusively the first book of the KP by Civañāṉa Muṉivar that is referred to, whereas the second book by Kacciyappa Muṉivar appears to be far less well known.

The first book of the KP has been investigated in a Tamil monograph by Cāmi Aiyā (1989), and its contents have been summarized in French by Dessigane, Pattabiramin, and Filliozat (1964). As has already been noticed by Dessigane et al. (1964, vi–vii) the first book of the KP is based on the KM(Ś). The KP begins with four chapters that have no equivalent in the KM(Ś): a prefatory section (*pāyiram*) and two lengthy chapters that contain an ornate description of the region surrounding Kanchipuram and of the city itself (*tirunāṭṭuppaṭalam*, "chapter on the country," and *tirunakarappaṭalam*, "chapter on the city"), followed by a chapter that summarizes the contents of the text (*patikam*). These chapters are conventional elements of Tamil *talapurāṇams*, which Civañāṉa Muṉivar added following the rules of Tamil poetics. The rest of the first book of the KP, however, closely follows the KM(Ś): chapters 5 to 7 contain the Purāṇic frame story, chapters 8 to 64 deal with the various Śiva temples of Kanchipuram, and chapters 65 to 67 correspond to the miscellaneous matter found at the end of the KM(Ś).[35] The temples described in the first book of the KP are, except for a few omissions, the same as in the KM(Ś), and they are listed in exactly the same sequence.[36] The narratives, too, closely correspond to those found in the KM(Ś). However, while the KP follows the KM(Ś) very closely on a narrative level, it differs markedly with regards to its literary outlook. I have discussed this question in more detail elsewhere (Buchholz forthcoming), but here it will be enough to maintain that unlike the KM(Ś), which, like most Sanskrit *māhātmyas*, is a relatively unpolished text, the KP is written in an extremely sophisticated poetic style, employing a complex poetic diction and intricate figures of speech. Such a situation is typical for Tamil *talapurāṇams* in general, which, as has already been noted by George L. Hart (1976, 343), are much more akin to Sanskrit ornate poetry (*kāvya*) than to Purāṇic literature. The KM(Ś) and the KP thus provide a prime example for the way in which Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* and Tamil *talapurāṇams* are intimately connected, while at the same time pursuing entirely different literary agendas.

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35 The number of chapters in the KM(Ś) and the KP differs because of the different organization of the texts. While the KM(Ś) often lumps sections on different temples together in a single chapter, the KP, as a rule, devotes a separate chapter to each temple.

36 The reason for the omissions remains to be investigated. However, at least partly they can be explained through the fact that the KP seems to be based on a different recension of the KM(Ś): some of the passages that are omitted in the KP are not found in all manuscripts of the KM(Ś).

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Kacciyappa Muṉivar's Second Book of the *Kāñcippurāṇam*

As I have already pointed out, Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book of the KP stands in the shadow of Civañāṉa Muṉivar's first book. It is telling that the second book is not included in the French summary of the KP by Dessigane et al. (1964), and also otherwise Kacciyappa Muṉivar's work has been almost completely ignored by scholarship. As we have seen, the second book of the KP is, for all practical purposes, an independent composition. Unlike Zvelebil (1975, 248) claims, Kacciyappa Muṉivar did not "finish" Civañāṉa Muṉivar's work, but rather created an entirely new text. He did, however, choose to frame his composition as the second book of the work that had been begun by his teacher. The ambivalent status of the second book of the KP becomes clear from its prefatory section (*pāyiram*). Whereas the first book contains a lengthy *pāyiram* of 27 verses, as it was customary for Tamil *talapurāṇams*, the second book begins with only four introductory verses: one invocation verse each to Gaṇeśa, Ekāmranātha, and Kāmākṣī, and a verse in which the author states his intention to compose the text. In other words, the fact that Kacciyappa Muṉivar's text was a separate composition by a different author called for some kind of introduction, but its status as the second book of the KP did not allow for the inclusion of a full-fledged *pāyiram*.

The second book of the KP contains rather heterogeneous material. After the short prefatory section, it includes two lengthy chapters, the *tirukkaṇpuṭaittapaṭalam* or "chapter on the covering of the sacred eyes" and the *kaḻuvāyppaṭalam* or "chapter on the expiation," which contain another retelling of the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth. Chapter 4 (*antaruvētippaṭalam*, "chapter on the *antarvedī*") describes Kanchipuram's sacred space as the area lying between the Palar and Cheyyar rivers (termed *antarvedī*).[37] Chapter 5 (*nakarērṟuppaṭalam*, "chapter on the founding of the city") contains a mythical account on Kanchipuram's founding. Chapter 6 (*tīrttavicēṭappaṭalam*, "chapter on the excellence of the *tīrthas*") then deals with the sacred water-bodies (*tīrtha*) in Kanchipuram, chapter 7 (*paṉṉirunāmappaṭalam*, "chapter on the twelve names") with the city's mythological names, and chapter 8 (*irupatteṇṭaḷippaṭalam*, "chapter on the twenty-eight temples") with what are deemed the most

37 The term *antarvedī*, lit. "inside of the sacrificial ground," normally refers to the area between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. Here it is applied to the area between the Palar and the Cheyyar rivers, which is explicitly said to be superior to the *antarvedī* between the Ganges and the Yamuna (KP II.4.22). Incidentally, the *antaruvētippaṭalam* seems to reflect a state of affairs when the Palar river had a different course than it currently has. Today, Kanchipuram is *not* situated between the Palar and the Cheyyar, but both rivers flow to the south of the city. However, the places that are said to be on the banks of the Palar in the *antaruvētippaṭalam*—Varākapuram (Tāmal), Tirumāṟpēṟu (Tirumālpūr), and Parācirāmēccaram (Paḷḷūr) (cf. KP II.4.6–14)—are all situated to the north of Kanchipuram along what seems to be a former riverbed of the Palar. On the shifting courses of the Palar river, see Resmi et al. 2016. This intriguing issue deserves further investigation.

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important temples of Kanchipuram, encompassing twenty Śiva temples and eight Viṣṇu temples.

Like Civañāṉa Muṉivar's first book of the KP, Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book is also based on a Sanskrit source, albeit a different one. As it is often the case in Tamil *talapurāṇams*, the second book of the KP itself lists its sources, in the last verse of the prefatory section (KP II.1.4), where the author declares his intention to compose the work:

> *viyaṉ caṉaṟkumāra caṅkitai teritta mēṉmaiy īṇṭ' aṟaintaṉam itaṉmēl*
> *iyampu pal vēṟu purāṇattum āṇṭ' āṇṭ' ilakiya kāñci māṉmiyattai*
> *nayant' eṭutt' oḻuṅku paṭat tokutt' uraippāṉ pukuntu muṉ ṉavil piramāṇṭatt'*
> *ayaṉ caṉaṟkumāraṉ ṟeḷitarat teruṭṭum aṟputak kātaikaṭṭ' uraippām.*
>
> We have told here the greatness that has been revealed in the vast *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā*. In addition, having gladly set out to select, orderly collect, and tell the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* that shines (or: the *Kāñcīmāhātmyas* that shine) here and there in the many different famous *purāṇas*, we will tell that which is found in the marvellous stories that Brahmā proclaimed to Sanatkumāra in the ancient *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.

The reference to the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* at the beginning of the verse refers to the first book of the KP (as we have seen, the first book is based on the KM(Ś), which claims to belong to the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* of the *Skandapurāṇa*). The wording of the rest of the verse is not entirely clear, but it seems that the author claims to retell different *māhātmyas* on Kanchipuram that have been compiled from various *purāṇas*, beginning with one that is said to have been told by Brahmā to Sanatkumāra in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. This is matched by a statement in the last verse of the *nakarēṟṟuppaṭalam* (KP II.5.279), where the author tells us: "We have told here the story that Brahmā, who lives on the pericarp of the fragrant lotus flower, revealed to Sanatkumāra in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. [Now] we will tell other things" (*piramāṇṭa purāṇan taṉṉiṉ maru malarp pokuṭṭu vāḻkkai vāṉavaṉ caṉaṟkumāraṟk' aruḷiya kātai maṟṟ' iṅk' aṟaintaṉam piṟavuñ colvām*). In other words, the first four chapters (discounting the prefatory section) of the second book of the KP seem to be based on a source that claims to belong to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and is framed as a dialogue between Brahmā and Sanatkumāra, whereas the remaining three chapters are based on a different source, which is not identified.

The source of the first four chapters of the second book appears to be identical with, or at least closely related to, the unpublished text that is contained in the manuscript Pondicherry IFP 30590 (see above). As we have seen, this text claims to belong to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and is framed as a dialogue between Brahmā and Sanatkumāra. While the Pondicherry manuscript calls for more detailed investigation, my preliminary findings suggest that its contents match those of the first five chapters in the second book of the KP. Chapters 2 to 12 of the Pondicherry manuscript correspond to the *tirukkaṉpuṭaittapaṭalam* and the *kaḻuvāyppaṭalam*, chapters 13 to 15 to the *antaruvētippaṭalam*, and chapters 16 to 20 to the *nakarēṟṟuppaṭalam*. On a more

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concrete level, one may consider for example the mythical account of the origin of the Palar river found at the beginning of chapter 13 in the Pondicherry manuscript (fol. 35v, l. 2 to fol. 36r, l. 7), which closely matches that found at the beginning of the *antaruvētippaṭalam* (KP II.4.1–5).

Another piece of information concerning the sources of the second book of the KP is found in the preface to the 1910 edition of the KP. Here the editor Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār claims that the second book of the KP is based on a Sanskrit text called *Śatādhyāyī*, a text which is said to consist of one hundred chapters and to be "compiled from many *purāṇas*, such as the *Śivapurāṇa* and the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*" (Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār 1910, 10–11).[38] The source of Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār's information is unknown, but it is possible that he based himself on traditional knowledge that was current in Kanchipuram during his time. The text to which Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār refers may be identical to the one that is contained in the manuscripts London Mackenzie III.21a and Mysore ORI 4086 (see above). We may recall that the London manuscript contains a text that is said to be part of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇasaṃgraha* and the *Sarvapurāṇasaṃgraha* and breaks off in chapter 98, whereas the text in the Mysore manuscript is said to belong to the *Purāṇasaṃgraha* and contains ninety-seven chapters. In both cases, the number of chapters (close to one hundred) and the reference to a "compilation" (*saṃgraha*) of *purāṇas* seems to match the information given by Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār.

How does this relate to what we have seen about the relation between the Pondicherry manuscript and the first four chapters of the second book of the KP? It is possible that the text contained in the London and Mysore manuscripts (the *Śatādhyāyī* of Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār) is a compilation of different sources, one of which is the text that is contained in the Pondicherry manuscript. Possibly this compilation later became the source for Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book of the KP. This would account for the references to a compilation that are found both in the London and Mysore manuscripts and in Kacciyappa Muṉivar's prefatory verse, as well as for the parallels between the second book of the KP and the Pondicherry manuscript. However, since I have so far not been able to investigate the London and Mysore manuscripts, this conclusion is far from being an established fact. More research on the unpublished Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram as well as on their relation to each other and to the second book of the KP is called for.

Kaccālaiyar's Old *Kāñcippurāṇam* (KP(O))

Another Tamil *talapurāṇam* of Kanchipuram exists in the form of the KP(O). This work is also known under the alternative title *Kamparpurāṇam*, which betrays its Śaiva orientation (*Kampar* being an old Tamil name for Ekāmranātha). It was authored by a certain Kaccālaiyar, who is said to have belonged to the Āḷavantār

38 Cf. also Ramanatha Ayyar 1965, 151–152, whose information is presumably based on Nākaliṅka Mutaliyār.

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Ātīṉam, apparently a Śaiva monastery, about which I, however, could find no further information. The date of the KP(O) is unknown, but the fact that it is known as the "Old KP" suggests that it must predate the KP of Civañāṉa Muṉivar and Kacciyappa Muṉivar. The KP(O) is far less well known than the KP and was edited as late as 1983. So far, it has received no scholarly attention.

The KP(O) comprises 1272 verses divided over twelve chapters of unequal length. After the prefatory section (*pāyiram*), the very long second chapter, titled *civālayac carukkam*, "chapter on the Śiva temples," describes various Śiva temples in and around Kanchipuram. It is followed by chapters on the city's Viṣṇu temples (*aritirumuṟṟac carukkam*, "chapter on Hari's sacred courtyard"), its sacred waterbodies (*tīrttac carukkam*, "chapter on the *tīrthas*"), and its mythological names (*apitāṉac carukkam*, "chapter on the names"). The following six chapters (*kayilāyac carukkam*, "chapter on Mount Kailāsa"; *umaivaru carukkam*, "chapter of Umā's arrival"; *nakarac carukkam*, "chapter on the city"; *nakarkāṇ carukkam*, "chapter on the sight of the city"; *pūcaic carukkam*, "chapter on the worship"; *tiruviḻāc carukkam*, "chapter on the festival") appear to contain a retelling of the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth. The last chapter (*tarmac carukkam*, "chapter on *dharma*") finally deals with rules of conduct.

The KP(O) seems to be based on two different Sanskrit sources. The chapter on the Śiva temples in Kanchipuram is clearly based on the KM(Ś). It describes the same temples in largely the same sequence. The narratives also mostly appear to correspond to those found in the KM(Ś), although the KP(O) follows its Sanskrit source less closely than Civañāṉa Muṉivar's first book of the KP. The last chapter of the KP(O) might likewise be based on the KM(Ś), which also includes a section on rules of conduct. The other chapters, on the other hand, have no basis in the KM(Ś). However, their contents seem to correspond to those of Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book of the KP. Both texts contain sections on Kanchipuram's sacred waterbodies, the city's mythological names, and an account of the Kāmākṣī–Ekāmranātha myth. Moreover, both texts also deal with Viṣṇu temples in Kanchipuram (in a separate chapter in the case of the KP(O) and as a part of the chapter on the city's twenty-eight most important temples in the second book of the KP). How exactly the two texts relate to each other remains to be investigated, but it appears possible that the other chapters of the KP(O) are based on the same Sanskrit text that also was the source for Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book of the KP.

What the KP(O) itself says about its sources seems to point towards the same direction. In the *pāyiram*, we find the following verse in which the author names his sources (KP(O) 1.20):

pōta neṟiy aṟi cūtar pukaṉṟat' āṉa purātaṉam ākum patiṉeṇ purāṇan taṉṉiṟ
cōti tikaḷ kāñci nakarp purāṇan taṉṉai coṟ payilap paṟpalavuñ collāniṟkum
cātakam ām piramāṇṭaṅ kāntan taṉṉiṟ caṉaṟkumāra caṅkitaiyiṟ ṟarukkāṟ kūṟum
pētam elān terint' ematu kurunātaṉ ṟaṉ pēr aruḷāl ik kātai pēcuvāmāl

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> Among the eighteen ancient *purāṇas* that were narrated by Sūta, who knows the way of wisdom, many eloquently tell the *purāṇa* of the city of Kāñci, which shines with light. Knowing all the different versions (*pētam*) that are elaborately told in the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* of the *Skāndapurāṇa* and in the accomplished *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, we will tell this story thanks to the great grace of our exalted Guru.

The KP(O) thus identifies as its sources the *Sanatkumārasaṃhitā* of the *Skandapurāṇa*, to which, as we may recall, the KM(Ś) claims to belong, and the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. As we have seen, the unpublished *sthalamāhātmya* contained in the Pondicherry manuscript, whose contents match the first four chapters of the second book of the KP, ascribes itself to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. However, the KP(O) also contains material that seems to correspond to the latter chapters of the second book of the KP, suggesting that its other source might have been the same text on which the second book of the KP appears to be based, namely the more comprehensive text in one hundred chapters (possibly contained in the London and Mysore manuscripts) that was presumably compiled from various sources, including the text contained in the Pondicherry manuscript. In this case, too, more research is needed before we can reach any definite conclusion.

Vedāntadeśika's *Hastigirimāhātmya* (HM(V))

While the aforementioned Tamil *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram are Śaiva works, there is also a Vaiṣṇava text in Tamil, namely the HM(V) (not to be confused with the Sanskrit HM). The HM(V) is rather different from both the Tamil *talapurāṇams* and the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* and might be better considered a work *sui generis*. It was authored by Vedāntadeśika (ca. 1268–1369), one of the most important preceptors of the Śrīvaiṣṇava sect of Hinduism, who was a native of Kanchipuram and a devotee of Varadarāja Perumāḷ.[39] Vedāntadeśika left behind a very sizeable oeuvre, which comprises both religio-philosophical texts and poetical works in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Prakrit. The HM(V) is counted among his thirty-two esoteric works or *rahasyagranthas*. It is also known as *Satyavratakṣetramāhātmya* (*satyavratakṣetra*, "the field of true vows," being a common designation for Kanchipuram's sacred area in the Vaiṣṇava texts) or under the Tamil title *Meyviratamāṉmiyam* (*meyviratam* being the Tamil translation of Skt. *satyavrata*). The text consists of twenty-nine verses in Tamil and an autocommentary by Vedāntadeśika in Maṇipravāḷam (Sanskritized Tamil). It tells the story of Brahmā's sacrifice (the foundational myth of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple) in a condensed poetic form, while the autocommentary interprets the myth from a theological point of view. A translation and analysis of the HM(V) has been published by Steven Paul Hopkins (2002, 84–113).

Due to its brevity, its poetic form, and the philosophical outlook of Vedāntadeśika's autocommentary, the HM(V) is a rather unique text. Lacking most of the usual

39 On Vedāntadeśika's life and works, see Singh 1958 and Hopkins 2002.

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features of a Tamil *talapurāṇam*, it can hardly be considered to belong to this genre.[40] As a poetic composition by an individual author, it is also very different from the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*. Nevertheless, there is a palpable connection between the HM(V) and the Vaiṣṇava *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram, all of which deal with the same mythical narrative. Moreover, the HM(V) appears to be directly based on a Sanskrit source. In his autocommentary on the first verse, Vedāntadeśika states his intention to retell "the greatness of Viṣṇu that has been shown through the *Satyavratakṣetramāhātmya* in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*" (*brahmāṇḍapurāṇattil satyavratakṣetramāhātmyamukhattālē sandarśitamāṉa pēraruḷāḷaṉ perumaiyai*). I suggest that, in spite of the different title, the text to which Vedāntadeśika refers is identical to the Sanskrit HM. We may recall that while the printed editions ascribe the HM to the *Brahmapurāṇa*, in some of the manuscripts, the text is ascribed to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*. It is true that the KM(V) also claims to belong to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and even refers to itself as *Satyavratakṣetramāhātmya* in one place (KM(V) 32.24). However, the narrative of the HM(V) seems to be closer to the HM than to the KM(V). While a detailed narrative comparison of the three texts is outside the scope of this contribution, we may note that verse 26 of the HM(V) refers to Gajendra, Bṛhaspati, and Ananta, who are said to have worshipped Varadarāja Perumāḷ during successive *yugas*—a narrative element that is also found in the HM, but not in the KM(V). Moreover, as we have already seen, Vedāntadeśika also quotes from the HM in his autocommentary.[41] All of this seems to suggest that the HM(V) is based on the Sanskrit HM. However, a more detailed comparison of the different Sanskrit and Tamil versions of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple's foundational myth remains a desideratum.

Prose *Talapurāṇams*

As a rule, Tamil *talapurāṇams*, like most literary texts in premodern India, were composed in verse form. However, prose versions of Tamil *talapurāṇams* also exist. Although such texts are occasionally found in manuscript form, for the most part they seem to be a product of modern print culture.[42] In parallel with the printing of

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40 Hopkins's claim that the HM(V) incorporates "in one way or another" most of the conventional elements of a Tamil *talapurāṇam* notwithstanding (cf. Hopkins 2002, 276, fn. 80).

41 So far, I have been able to identify the following quotations from the HM in Vedāntadeśika's autocommentary: HM 7.62–63 (*ad* HM(V) 15), HM 8.8c–9b, 8.10c–11b (*ad* HM(V) 20); HM 9.32c–34b, 9.69c–70b (*ad* HM(V) 23).

42 A prose summary of the KP, titled *Kāñcippurāṇac curukkam* and dated to 1847, is found (along with summaries of a large number of other Tamil texts) in the paper manuscript Indien 162, held by the Bibliothéque nationale de France in Paris. However, since the manuscript goes back to the collection of Edouard Ariel (1818–1854), a colonial administrator in Pondicherry and a scholar of Tamil, it seems likely that the summaries were in fact commissioned by Ariel. As such, this prose summary of the KP might be best seen as a product of Orientalist knowledge

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text editions of Tamil *talapurāṇams*, prose retellings of these texts, usually termed *vacaṉam* ("prose"), also started to appear from the late nineteenth century onwards. Thus, a prose version of the first book of the KP by a certain Pu. Kaṉakacapai Nāyakar was published in 1887 under the title *Kāñcippurāṇa vacaṉam*. This text follows the KP rather closely, but rephrases its verses in a simpler prose idiom. Evidently its purpose is to make the contents of the KP accessible to a broader audience, as the original text is not easily intelligible because of its complicated poetic language. As such, the goal of the prose paraphrase is similar to that of a commentary, but it differs from the latter by disjoining the contents of the text from the original wording. Jay Ramesh (2020, 177) has argued that such prose *talapurāṇams* can be characterized as "informative" because their main objective is to simply present the reader information about the places they describe, as opposed to poetic *talapurāṇams*, which are "affective" as they seek to create an emotional experience for the reader (or rather listener, since these texts were meant to be publicly recited). Clearly, prose *talapurāṇams* follow a very different agenda than traditional Tamil *talapurāṇams*, mirroring the radical change that Tamil literary culture underwent under the influence of print.

Apart from prose versions of Tamil *talapurāṇams*, renderings of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* in Tamil prose also exist. As far as Kanchipuram is concerned, two such texts were authored by Kā. Ē. Ālālacuntaram Piḷḷai (1852–1922).[43] The first of them is the *Kāmākṣi Līlā Pirapāvam*, a Tamil prose rendering of the KV, first published in 1906 and reprinted in 1939 and 1999. The second is a Tamil prose rendering of the KM(Ś), published posthumously in 1941 under the title *Kāñcimakātmiyam*: *vaṭamoḻik kāñcip purāṇam* or "*Kāñcīmāhātmya*: the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (or: a *purāṇa* on Kanchi) in Sanskrit." As in the case of the prose retellings of Tamil *talapurāṇams*, the purpose of these texts, too, seems to have been to make the contents of the original accessible to a larger readership (in this case, one that does not read Sanskrit). The appearance of such texts is meaningful because it attests a shifting paradigm of "translation." Unlike traditional Tamil *talapurāṇams*, which, as we have seen, are also often based on Sanskrit sources, but may be better described as poetic transcreations, these modern texts simply aim at conveying the meaning of the Sanskrit original in Tamil and thus adopt a novel concept of translation.

Apart from his two Tamil translations of Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas*, Ālālacuntaram Piḷḷai also authored the *Kāñci Kṣēttira Mañcari*, a list of Śiva temples in Kanchipuram mostly based on the KM(Ś). This text was published together with the *Kāmākṣi Līlā Pirapāvam* in 1906, apparently in a single volume. In 1927, the *Kāñci*

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production. Whether there are also prose versions of Tamil *talapurāṇams* that originated in the indigenous manuscript culture remains to be investigated.

43 The same Kā. Ē. Ālālacuntaram Piḷḷai was (together with a certain Cupparāya Ceṭṭiyār) also responsible for the 1900 edition of the KP. His birth and death dates are based on the information found the online catalogue of the Roja Muthiah Research Library. I have not been able to find more biographical information on him.

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Kṣēttira Mañcari and the *Kāmākṣi Līlā Pirapāvam* were published under the common title *Śrī Kāñcī Mahimai*, without, however, crediting the original author Ālālacuntaram Piḷḷai. This publication seems to have found wide dissemination through numerous reprints. The most recent edition of *Śrī Kāñcī Mahimai* of which I am aware must have been published after 2018.[44] An English rendering of the *Śrī Kāñcī Mahimai*, by a certain P. R. Kannan, is also found on the website of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.[45] This example shows that *sthalamāhātmyas*, though they may be rarely read in the original today, are still influential through the mediation of the numerous new incarnations that they have undergone.

Conclusion

This survey of Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams* shows that Kanchipuram possesses a rich corpus of temple legends, which reflects both the dynamic relations between the city's diverse religious traditions and the interaction between the Sanskrit and Tamil literary cultures. It is worth noting that while the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* of Kanchipuram represent different sectarian traditions (Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Śāktism), the city's Tamil *talapurāṇams* are all of Śaiva orientation. The only Vaiṣṇava text in Tamil, the HM(V), as we have seen, is a rather unusual case and cannot be considered a *talapurāṇam* in the strict sense. This situation is fairly typical for the Tamil *talapurāṇam* genre: in contrast to hundreds of Śaiva *talapurāṇams* in Tamil, only a handful of Vaiṣṇava texts (and a single Muslim *talapurāṇam*) are known (Mātavaṉ 1995, vol. II, 88–90). Even if one takes into account that Śiva temples are simply more numerous than Viṣṇu temples in Tamil Nadu, Vaiṣṇava *talapurāṇams* are clearly underrepresented. The Tamil *talapurāṇam* genre thus seems, for reasons that remain to be investigated, to be a largely Śaiva affair as even Kanchipuram, one of the major centres of Vaiṣṇavism in Tamil Nadu, did not receive a Vaiṣṇava *talapurāṇam* in Tamil.

Moreover, we have seen that the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* and Tamil *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram are intimately related. Each of the Tamil texts is based on a Sanskrit source: the first book of the KP on the KM(Ś), the second book of the KP on an unpublished Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmya*, which, however, appears to be available in manuscript form, and the KP(O) apparently on a combination of the two aforementioned sources. Furthermore, the HM(V) seems to be based on the Sanskrit HM. These findings underscore the importance of studying texts in Sanskrit and in regional languages (in our case, Tamil) in conjunction—an approach that unfortunately has been often neglected in Indological scholarship. A more detailed investigation of the relation between the Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* and the Tamil

44 The edition is undated, but it refers to Vijayendra Saraswati as the seventieth pontiff of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham. Vijayendra Saraswati assumed this office in February 2018.

45 http://www.kamakoti.org/kamakoti/books/Kanchi-Mahima.html (accessed March 25, 2021).

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talapurāṇams will advance an understanding of how the Sanskrit and Tamil literary cultures interacted in early modern South India, but also highlight how the two traditions differ from each other.

While the purpose of this contribution is to present an overview of Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams*, a more substantive discussion of the texts and of their relation to Kanchipuram's lived religious traditions must be left to future publications. In this respect, a study of the temple network that is outlined by the KM(Ś) and the first book of the KP (a task that involves correlating the sites that are mentioned in these texts with temples that exist in Kanchipuram's cityscape) seems particularly promising. As we have seen, the KP is today considered an authoritative source on the Śaiva temples of Kanchipuram. An investigation of how this text has contributed to the shaping of Kanchipuram's religious landscape may provide valuable insights into the relation between textual sources and Hindu sacred topography in a more general scope.

Apart from these prospective avenues of research that I have just outlined, this survey of the *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram has identified a number of other future tasks. This begins with the very basic task of making the unpublished *sthalamāhātmyas* that exist in manuscript form available for further scholarship by producing text editions. Similarly, the textual history of those texts that have been printed appears complex enough to award an investigation. Moreover, while some texts have received scholarly attention, others have gone virtually unnoticed. This is true, for example for Kacciyappa Muṉivar's second book of the KP, which, as we have seen, has been eclipsed by the renown of Civañāṉa Muṉivar's first book, but which contains remarkable and largely untapped material. This survey of the *sthalamāhātmyas* and *talapurāṇams* of Kanchipuram has thus shown how much scope for research there is even in the corpus of the temple legends of a single city—not to speak of the vast number of such texts that exist on other places all over India.

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A Survey of the *Sthalapurāṇa* Literature in Tamil[1]

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1. Introduction

According to a standard definition, *purāṇas* are "a class of Sanskrit books which deal with ancient and medieval Indian theology, astronomy, cosmogony, genealogy, accounts of kings and rishis, and miscellaneous materials, all illustrated by fables, songs, legends and tales: literally old or ancient lore. The oldest of the *Purāṇas* dates from some from 600 A.D. and some of them may be as late as the 13th or 16th century. All of them have undergone revisions and each in its form enumerates the whole group. They [...] were originally written in verse in the form of a dialog between two persons into which are woven stories and discourses uttered by other persons. They are attributed to a rishi or to the gods. The five subjects which are proper to the *Purāṇas* are *sarga*, *pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation), *manvantara* (periods of the Manus) *vaṃśa* (genealogies), and *vaṃśyānucharita* (history of the solar and lunar races mentioned in the *vaṃśa*)" (Leach 1949, 910–911). But this definition has to be adjusted to include *purāṇas* in other Indian languages, which also have such compositions inspired by their Sanskrit counterparts as translations, adaptations, recreations and original creations in large numbers.

Purāṇa literature is traditionally divided into (1) *mahāpurāṇas* (2) *upapurāṇas* and (3) *sthalapurāṇas*. Among these, *sthalapurāṇas* may be considered as a subtype, derived from both *mahāpurāṇas* and *upapurāṇas*. The following is a survey of the *sthalapurāṇa* literature in Tamil.

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1 This is a completely revised version of a paper published by the present author as "*Sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil" in the *Research Papers* (Annual Journal of the Department of Tamil of the University of Kerala) (Nachimuthu 1984–1985). It is based on a survey and study of printed *sthalapurāṇas* called *Tamiḻil Talapurāṇa Ilakkiyam* (Krishnaswamy 1974), which formed part of the M.A. dissertation submitted by V. Krishnaswamy of the 1972–1974 batch to the Department of Tamil at the University of Kerala, Kariavattom under my guidance. Earlier Mu. Arunachalam (2005 [1977]) has covered many of these *purāṇas* in his books on the history of Tamil literature. This is the first complete study of this genre, though limited in some aspects. Since then a few studies have appeared in Tamil and English. In Tamil a two-volume study of *sthalapurāṇa* literature by Vē. Rā. Mātavaṉ (1995) and in English studies by David Shulman (1980), William P. Harman (1989) and recently Jay Ramesh (2020) have come out.

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2. Tamil *Purāṇas*

2.1 Classification of the Tamil *Purāṇas*

The numerous Tamil works that go under the name *purāṇa* can be classified according to their subject matter as follows (cf. Krishnaswamy 1974, 3–4):

(1) *Purāṇas* dealing with the deeds of gods:
Examples: *mahāpurāṇas* and *upapurāṇas*, e.g., *Maccapurāṇam* (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Murukaṉ), *Kūrmapurāṇam* (Viṣṇu, Śiva), *Civamakāpurāṇam* (Śiva), *Kantapurāṇam* (Murukaṉ), *Upatēcakāṇṭam* (Murukaṉ), *Piramōttarakāṇṭam* (Śiva), etc.

(2) *Purāṇas* dealing with the lives of great men:
Examples: *Tiruttoṇṭar purāṇam* or *Periyapurāṇam* (legends on the lives of the sixty three Śaiva Nāyaṉmārs), *Cēkkiḻār purāṇam* (legends on the life of Cēkkiḻār, the author of the *Periyapurāṇam*), *Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ purāṇam* (legends on the life of the Śaivite saint Māṇikkavācakar), *Pulavar purāṇam* (legends on the lives of seventy-two Tamil poets), *Cēyttoṇṭar purāṇam* (legends on the lives of seventy-eight Murukaṉ devotees), *Śrīpurāṇam* (legends on the lives of twenty-two Jain Tīrthaṅkaras and Jain kings), *Mērumantara purāṇam* (legends of Meru and Mandara, two great Jain devotees).

(3) *Purāṇas* dealing with the legends of places (also called *sthalapurāṇas*), which enumerate the significance of *mūrti* (the deity), *sthala* (the sacred locale) and *tīrtha* (sacred water bodies):
Examples: *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* (legends of Śiva at Maturai), *Kōyiṟpurāṇam* (legends of Citamparam), *Kāñcippurāṇam* (legends of Kāñcipuram), *Tirunākaikkārōṇapurāṇam* (legends of Nākaikkārōṇam or Nākappaṭṭiṉam), *Taṇikaippurāṇam* (legends of Tiruttaṇi), etc.

(4) *Purāṇas* dealing with *tīrthas* alone:
Examples: *Kāvirippurāṇam* (or *Piramavaivarttam*) (legends of the river Kāvēri), *Poṉṉiccintu māṉmiya purāṇam* (legends of the river Tāmpiraparaṇi), *Peṇṇainatip purāṇam* (legends of the river Peṇṇaiyāṟu).

(5) *Purāṇas* dealing with *vratas* (religious vows, acts of austerity, holy practices, such as fasting, continence, etc.):
Examples: *Civarāttiripurāṇam* (legends of Śivarātri connected with Śiva), *Ēkātacipurāṇam* (legends of Ekādaśi connected with Viṣṇu).

(6) *Purāṇas* dealing with castes:
Examples: *Ceṅkuntar purāṇam* (mythological account of the Tamil weaving and martial community), *Vēḷāḷar purāṇam* (mythological account of the farming class).

(7) *Purāṇas* dealing with literary history:
Examples: *Tirumuṟaikaṇṭapurāṇam* (a composition by Umāpati Civācāriyār (thirteenth–fourteenth century): legends about the discovery and compilation

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of the Śaivite *Tirumuṟais* of the *Tēvāram* trio, i.e., Appar, Campantar and Cuntarar, at Citamparam).

(8) Miscellaneous:
Examples: *Pūtapurāṇam*, *Māpurāṇam* (supposed to have been composed during the Caṅkam period, i.e., about third century BCE to second century CE), works which are not extant, etc.

2.2 *Sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil

Among the varieties of *purāṇas* in Tamil, *sthalapurāṇas* (or *talapurāṇam* in Tamil) are most popular and available in large numbers. They are also known as *oḻuku* (e.g., *Kōyiloḻuku*) or *mahātmiyam/māṉmiyam* (e.g., *Hastikiri mahātmiyam*, *Ātikamalālaya mahātmiyam, Kurukaimāṉmiyam, Cittavaṭa māṉmiyam*, etc.). *Mānmiyakkōvai* (e.g., *Civālaya mānmiyakkōvai*), *līlai* (e.g., *Tiyākarācalīlai*), and *vicēṭam* (e.g., *Cētuvicēṭam*) are some less used synonyms.

Prose versions of *sthalapurāṇas* are known under a wide variety of names viz: *uṟpavam* (557), *kaipītu* (399, 555), *talaviḷakkam* (439), *tiruppatippirapāvam* (460), *pirapāvaciṇtāmaṇi* (421), *makattuvam* (59), *mahātmiya cāram* (194), *makimai* (23), *māṉmiyakkōvai* (173), *māṉmiya caṅkirakam* (244), *rakaciyam* (159), *līlāpirapāvam* (98), *varalāṟu* (53), *viḷakkam* (171), *vaipavam* (134, 574).[2]

3. Tamil *Sthalapurāṇas* – an Overview

3.1 Origin and History of the Tamil *Sthalapurāṇas*

Even though *Māpurāṇam* and *Pūtapurāṇam* from Caṅkam times (third century BCE to second century CE), *Cantipurāṇam* and *Purāṇacākaram* from the tenth century, and some other *purāṇa* works which are not extant now are known to us from the literary history of Tamil, the origin of the first *sthalapurāṇa* can be traced back to the twelfth century only. In the twelfth century CE a work called *Kaṉṉivaṉapurāṇam* composed by one Vīraittalivaṉ Paracamaiya Kōḷari is mentioned in the Tiruppātirippuliyūr inscriptions of Kulōttuṅka Cōḷaṉ I. Even though it is not extant now, one can infer that it is a *sthalapurāṇa* on Tiruppātirippuliyūr, Kaṉṉivaṉam being the legendary name for it. We do not know the nature of the other two works attributed to him, viz. *Aṣṭātacapurāṇam* and *Pūmpuliyūr Nāṭakam* (Arunachalam 1973, 334–335).

Perumpaṟṟappuliyūr Nampi's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* or *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭal* of the thirteenth century is the earliest of the available *sthalapurāṇas*.[3] The *Kōyiṟpurāṇam* of Umāpati Civācāriyār is a notable work of the fourteenth

2 The numbers in the brackets refer to the serial numbers in the *sthalapurāṇa* bibliography in V. Krishnaswamy's *Tamiḻil Talapurāṇa Ilakkiyam* (1974, 122–212).

3 Mu. Arunachalam (1970: 237–250) dates this text to the 13th century. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai (1952, 16) thinks that it belongs to the sixteenth century.

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century. After a lapse of a century, we see several *mahāpurāṇas* and *sthalapurāṇas* written during and after the sixteenth century. Since *purāṇas* along with *prabandhas* (texts belonging to various shorter poetic genres) dominated Tamil literary production between 1500 and 1850, Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai calls this period the *Purāṇa-Prabandha* period (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 36).

The following is a list of some important *sthalapurāṇas* (cf. Krishnaswamy 1974, 12–17):

Table 1: Some Important Sthalapurāṇas

Century	Name of work	Author
12th	*Kaṉṉivaṉapurāṇam* (not extant)	Vīraittalaivaṉ Paracamaya Kōḷari
13th	*Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*	Perumparṟappuliyūr Nampi
14th	*Kōyiṟpurāṇam*	Umāpati Civācāriyār
15th	*Kācikāṇṭam*	Ativīrarāma Pāṇṭiyaṉ
16th	*Kamalālayacciṟappu (Tiruvārūrppurāṇam), Aruṇakiripurāṇam*	Maraiñāṉa Tēcikar
17th	*Tiruveṇkāṭṭuppurāṇam, Tirucceṅkāṭṭuppurāṇam, Tīrttakirippurāṇam, Cevvantippurāṇam, Aruṇācalapurāṇam, Tiruviriñcaippurāṇam*	Caiva Ellappa Nāvalar
	Vētāraṇiyapurāṇam, Kumpakōṇappurāṇam	Akōra Muṉivar
	Tirukkūvappurāṇam	Civappirakāca Cuvāmikaḷ
	Cīkāḷattippurāṇam	Karuṇaippirakācar, Vēlaiyar
	Tirukkaḷukkuṉṟappurāṇam	Antakakkavi Vīrarākava Mutaliyār
	Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam	Parañcōti Muṉivar
18th	*Tirukkuṟṟālappurāṇam*	Tirikūṭarācappak Kavirāyar
	Kāñcippurāṇam (first book)	Civañaṉa Muṉivar
	Tiruppātirippuliyūrppurāṇam	Citamparnāta Muṉivar
	Tiruvāṉaikkāppurāṇam, Perūrppurāṇam, Pūvāḷūrppurāṇam, Taṇikaippurāṇam, Kāñcippurāṇam (second book)	Kacciyappa Muṉivar
19th	*Amparppurāṇam, Uraiyūrppurāṇam,*	Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai

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	Kumpakōṇappurāṇam,	
	Tirukkuṟukkaippurāṇam,	
	Kōyilūrppurāṇam,	
	Cūraimāṇakarppurāṇam,	
	Taṉiyūrppurāṇam,	
	Tirutturuttippurāṇam,	
	Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam,	
	Tirupperunturaippurāṇam,	
	Tirumayilaippurāṇam,	
	Tiruvaraṅkuḷattalapurāṇam,	
	Tiruvāḷoḷipuṟṟūrppurāṇam,	
	Paṭṭīsvarappurāṇam,	
	Maṇṇippaṭikkaraippurāṇam	
	Tirunelvēlittalapurāṇam	Nellaiyappa Kavirāyar
20th	*Aṉṉiyūrttalapurāṇam,*	Kantacāmi Cuvāmikaḷ
	Kavacaippurāṇam	

3.2 A brief survey of the Tamil *sthalapurāṇas*[4]

There are more than four hundred *sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil in verse form alone, only half of which have been published so far. A number of prose versions and adaptations of these *purāṇas* are also available. There is also the collection of local legends by Col. Mackenzie (1754–1821) in prose form, which is kept by the Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Ceṉṉai. A number of *sthalapurāṇas* are still in manuscript form and yet to be published, and a few published works cannot be traced any more.

We know of more than fifty *sthalapurāṇa* poets from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. Some of them have written more than one *purāṇa* of this type: Caiva Ellappa Nāvalar (seventeenth century) wrote six *purāṇas*, Kacciyappa Muṉivar (eighteenth century) five purāṇas and Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (nineteenth century) twenty-two.

Even though the *sthalapurāṇas* are distributed all over Tamilnadu, the Cōḻa country has particularly many of them because of its numerous temples. *Sthalapurāṇas* are also available for places like Kāśī or Tirukkōṇamalai (Sri Lanka) outside of the Tamil country. Several religious centers have received more than one *purāṇa* written by poets in different periods. This includes Maturai (seven), Citamparam (six), Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (five) Kumpakōṇam (four), Kāñcipuram (three), Cīrkāḻi (two) and Paḻani (two).

4 This discussion is based on the bibliography given in Krishnaswamy 1974, 123–212. Apart from old poetical compositions of *sthalapurāṇas*, it includes prose versions and also contains some repetitions. Therefore the statistics based on this bibliography are only indicative and need further verification.

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Among the *sthalapurāṇas*, roughly three hundred belong to Śiva, thirty belong to Viṣṇu, and twenty belong to Murukaṉ. There are two Jaina *sthalapurāṇas*, but these seem to be prose versions (*Pūṇṭi Jinālaya tala varalāṟu, Tirunaṟuṅkoṇṭai tala varalāṟu*). The *Nākūr Āṇṭavar purāṇam* seems to be the only poetical version of this genre belonging to Islam.

3.3 Development of the *Sthalapurāṇa*: Motivating Factors

If we look into the origin of the *purāṇas* and *sthalapurāṇas* in particular, we can perceive how various religious, political, economic, socio-cultural, literary and intellectual factors have played important roles in the development of this genre.

3.3.1 Religion

The Bhakti movement and the intense temple building activities of the Cōḻas and subsequent rulers have created numerous religious centers as places of veneration by the devotees. The educated clergy together with the laity created Purāṇic and local traditional stories and synthesized them to increase the reputation of these temple centers. These stories later formed the nucleus of the numerous *sthalapurāṇas* (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 311–319). A *sthalapurāṇa* marked the antiquity and sanctity of a place, trying to give it a pseudo-history and assert its eminence based on a mythical formula. Every place vied with each other in having a *sthalapurāṇa* to satisfy the pride of its inhabitants and to attract pilgrims.

3.3.2 Politics

After the rule of the Cōḻas, who unified the Tamil country and culture, the country was fragmented and came under alien rule. In the absence of a unifying leadership, the people and local leaders could not have a wider political outlook. This kind of political conditions fostered a form of patriotism that could only be local. Nampi (thirteenth century) in his *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* adds an invocation to the Pāṇṭiya country and Maturai, which shows his stirring up of sub-nationalism and local patriotism during the decline of Pāṇṭiya rule (see Readings 2.2). In the same vein the later poet Parañcōti (seventeenth century) in his *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* displays his fervour of nationalism and his love for his mother tongue Tamil in times of adversity (Nachimuthu 2009) (see Readings 3 and 5).

3.3.3 Economic Conditions

At the time of the composition of the *purāṇas*, famines and pestilence were common and the general condition was one of adversity. People turned towards religion and found solace in the Purāṇic lore, which tried to create a utopia of the past and the future. These myths tried to provide a basis for social faith and action. Prof. T. P. Meenakshisundaram (1965, 166–167) is right when he observes that "in the age of despair and despondency, hope is stirred in the hearts of men" by these *purāṇas*. This may be illustrated from the rich descriptions of the landscape, country, city and

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temple found at the beginning of the majority of *sthalapurāṇas*, a poetical prerequisite for a *mahākāvya* composition (see Reading 1).

3.3.4 Socio-Cultural Factors

Purāṇas of various temples can be seen as collections of folktales. Their value as such has remained clouded by their religious association. It is because of their being folk literature that they appeal to the common man (Meenakshisundaram 1965, 166–167). The *sthalapurāṇas* contain stories about gods, semi-gods, heroic kings, Brahmins, hunters, low-caste people (Paḷḷars/Paṟaiyars) and even animals and birds. All of them became equal in these *purāṇas* and they carry the message of God's love for all, even to sinners. So the *purāṇas* tried to integrate the different social and cultural factions at least in their fictional world. It is this Purāṇic lore which has helped to build up common pan-Indian social and cultural traits at the all-India level. The *purāṇas* themselves state that they are intended to be used by the Śūdras and women, who are less educated, than the other three upper castes, who can directly read the scriptures.[5] Here it should be understood that the word *purāṇas* refers to the narratives or stories, which were rendered as literary compositions by poets with many literary embellishments and might have been read by the elite. Later they were rendered and delivered to the layman with appropriate discourses like oral, musical, dance or other fine art forms like scultpture, painting, etc.

Rather than depicting a utopia, some conservative poets attempt a realistic portrayal of the times, including the intrusion of foreign powers into the land. Maṟaiñāṉa Campantar (sixteenth century) as a traditionalist describes the social structures as ordained in the works like *Manusmṛti* in his *Aruṇakirippurāṇam* (*valampuriccarukkam*). In his *Kamalālayacciṟappu* (*Tiruvārūrppurāṇam*), he bemoans the intrusion of foreigners and the attendant decline of old values (see Reading 5).

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5 *Tirukkurṟālattalappurāṇam, nūṟpayaṉuraitta carukkam*, verse 2 (p. 201):
ஆதி மறை நூலோதி வீடுபேறெய்துவர்க ளந்த ணாளர்
சாதி மனு வேந்தருக்கும் வைசியருக்கு முணர்த்து மறைச் சார்பாலெய்தும்
நீதியிலா விப்பிர மங்கையர் சதுர்த்தர் பிறர்க்கு மறை நிகழ்த்தொணாதா
லோதியபு ராணமவர்க் குறுதி நூலெனவுரைப்ப ருறுதி நூலோர்
āti maṟai nūlōti vīṭupēṟeytuvarka ḷanta ṇāḷar
cāti maṉu vēntarukkum vaiciyarukku muṇarttu maṟaic cārpāleytum
nītiyilā vippira maṅkaiyar caturttar piṟarkku maṟai nikaḷttoṇātā
lōtiyapu rāṇamavark kuṟuti nūleṉavuraippa ruṟuti nūlōr
"The Brahmins will obtain salvation by reciting the ancient Vedas. The ruling kings of higher caste and the merchant class (Vaiśyas) will also obtain salvation by the authority of the Vedas. For the Brahmin ladies and the people of the fourth order, who have no legal status in the social order, the Vedas cannot be imparted. So the authors of scriptures will ordain that the *purāṇās* which are recited are the religious texts for them".
See also such instances in other *sthalapurāṇas*, e.g. *Kamalālayacciṟappu* (*Tiruvārūrppurāṇam*), *pāyirac carukkam* 30.

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3.3.5 Literary Background

During the epic age (early epic period: 750–1000 CE, late epic period: 1100–1300 CE; cf. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 12), religion and the taste for romantic stories were the motive spirits behind most of the literary creations (cf. Krishnaswamy 1974, 5). But during the period of *purāṇas* and *prabandhas* (1500–1850 CE, cf. Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 12), religion appropriated all the literary pursuits and this has gradually led to the degeneration of the epic spirit and the multiplication of *purāṇa* literature. Tamil *purāṇas*, unlike the colorless Sanskrit Purāṇic accounts, which are more informative than literary, emulate an epic model with mythical content (see Readings 1). However, this exercise can be considered to have failed due to the lack of remarkable creative genius, sterile imagination, insipid style and imitative qualities.[6] We could still extract certain fine portions of literature in these works here and there, and a few *sthalapurāṇas* are as good as any other good epics. As poetic creations, these works must have been read and enjoyed by the highly literate elite of the upper social strata of society. They formed a source book for the popular speakers and experts in literary and religious discourses for making their own versions in speech, prose and ballad form for the benefit of the semi-literate womenfolk of the higher social strata and for the other less privileged of the society. Many of the episodes are enacted as dance and drama and also as rituals on festive occasions (e.g., *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*). Many prose versions of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* based on the poetical versions in the popular idiom are available in the palm-leaf tradition and in print culture.[7] It shows how the *sthalapurāṇas* are transmitted across time and social groups. In the learned tradition the poetical versions were learned and commented upon regulary (e.g., Parañcōti's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*, *Kāñcippurāṇam*, *Taṇikaippurāṇam*, etc.).[8]

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6 See for example the description of the semi-arid hillock of Ceṉṉimalai in *Ceṉṉimalaittalapurāṇam* 5.2, which is a mere imitation of the earlier conventions contrary to the realties. This seems to be the case with earlier works also.

7 Examples of prose versions of the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurānam* are available in unpublished palm-leaf manuscripts. In the modern period, the prose paraphrase of Parañcōti's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* by Āṟumuka Nāvalar (1822–1879) of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, is popular (Āṟumuka Nāvalar 1957). Another popular version was prepared and edited by Aruṇācala Mutaliyār and Pūvai Kaliyāṇacuntara Mutaliyār and published in a large font by the famous Irattiṉa Nāyakar & Sons, Ceṉṉai (Kaliyāṇacuntara Mutaliyār 1971). Similarly, episodes like the *valai vīciya tiruviḷaiyāṭal* (the game of Śiva fishing by casting the net in the sea) from the *Tiruvilaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* were rendered as *villuppāṭṭu* ballads in Tamil and Malayalam and were performed in Kaṉṉiyākumari district. At least three versions in Tamil (Vivēkāṉantaṉ 2000, 2006; Selvalakshmi 2005; *Valaivīcupurāṇam*, ed. by Pulavar Vi. Cokkaliṅkam 2008) and one in Malayalam (Vivēkāṉantaṉ 2000) are available.

8 For example the writing of modern commentaries to Parañcōti's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* (1927) by Na. Mu. Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār and to the *Taṇikaippurāṇam* (1965) by Kantacāmiyār et al. These texts were part of the syllabi for graduate courses in Tamil in the universities of Tamil Nadu. See also the modern commentary to the *Kāñcippurāṇam* (2012) by Caravaṇa Catācivam.

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The Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* compositions have generally been inspired by Sanskrit counterparts and so we see the reflection of a common literary milieu in them.[9] All the other Dravidian literatures show the same trend in this period (Mātavaṉ 1995).

3.3.6 Linguistic Milieu

The period of the *sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil literature may be roughly reckoned as eight hundred years from the twelfth century onwards. This was a period in which Sanskrit had gained much importance in education, administration, religion, philosophy and all the domains of knowledge. So Tamil-Sanskrit bilingualism was prevalent. The Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* always claim a Sanskrit source for their composition. Therefore one can notice the impact of ideas and the language of Sanskrit on the idiom of Tamil works, which may have to be worked out comparatively.

A discernible linguistic domain of Tamil-Sanskrit interaction is the interpretation of the local names or what is called the etymological interpretation of place names. During this period the Tamil language was languishing due to the decline of native rule and consequent lack of patronage. It seems that the average education level in Tamil was very low and the spoken variety in different dialects of Tamil gained currency, leaving the standard language in the hands of a bilingual elite. Due to this, the standard forms of place name became corrupted, leading to fanciful etymologies. While this took place as an internal change the influence and prestige of Sanskrit led to a fashion of sanskritising Tamil names and translating the Tamil names into Sanskrit with bizarre etymologies and all such forms became standardized place names. At times a reverse translation of sanskritized names also took place. For example, the name *Cirrampalam* was corrupted to *Citamparam* due to regular internal changes in Tamil (*r*>*t* dentalisation, *r*>*l* alveolarisation) but later received a Sanskrit etymology (*cit*, "consciousness," "wisdom," *ambaram*, "atmosphere,", "sky," "ether"). Cities had multiple names in different epochs. The names of rivers and other water bodies which are celebrated as *tīrthas* are mentioned in the *sthalapurāṇas*. The origins of all such names are explained with fanciful etymologies in the *sthalapurāṇas* (e.g., the multiple names of Maturai in Nampi's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭarpurāṇam*, verses 9–15). As such, the *sthalapurāṇas* provide a wide variety of linguistic data to know the folklore of place names. All these phenomena have been documented and studied on the study of place names by different authors (Puthusseri Ramachandran and Nachimuthu 1987, Nachimuthu 1993).

3.3.7 Other Factors

The *mahāpurāṇas* and *sthalapurāṇas* fulfilled the need of the society for a description of history and geography of the land and also as sources for the religious cosmogony and cosmology. One can observe these aspects in the Purāṇic literature with their own methods of historiography (Ali 1966). In addition to being epics and

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9 Contrary to what S. Vaiyapuri Pillai says in his work (1957, 318).

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myths, the *sthalapurāṇas* tried to be substitutes for history, geography, philosophy, ethics, fine arts, grammar and so forth. As such, they represent a premodern form of historiography. The critique of the *purāṇas* by the great social reformer Periyār E.V. Rāmacāmi Nāyakkar (1879–1973) is worth mentioning here (Vīramaṇi 2007).

The *sthalapurāṇas* served as pilgrims' travel guides with details of places of interest to be visited in the holy cities by the devotees.

The *sthalapurāṇas* also served as a constant source for the poets, sculptures, painters, musicians, dancers and other artistic groups for creating their artefacts with special reference to the places of worship.

4. *Sthalapurāṇa* – Definition, Structure and Other Characteristics

4.1 Definition of *Purāṇa* in General

The Tamil poetological literature provides various definitions of the *purāṇas*. The oldest extant Tamil treatise on grammar and poetics, the *Tolkāppiyam* (ca. first–third century CE) discusses the concept of *toṉmai* (narratives on antiquity), one of the eight *vaṉappus* (forms of beauty),[10] which may be equated with the *purāṇas*:

> *toṉmai tānē*
> *uraiyoṭu puṇarnta paḻamai mēṟṟē.* (*Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikāram Ceyyuḷiyal* 237, Pērāciriyar's commentary)
> "That (composition) which is *toṉmai*
> is composed of old stories (in poetry) together with prose."

The commentators give *Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Takaṭūr yāttirai*, and *Cilappatikāram* as illustrations. Though some of these works belong to the group of *itihāsa*, the definition is applied to *purāṇas*, too (Subramanian 1978, 325).

The *Cēntaṉ Tivākaram*, a Tamil thesaurus (*nighaṇṭu*) of the eighth century, repeats the Sanskrit definition of the *purāṇas* (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 13–15):

> காவிய வியற்கை[1] விரிக்குங்காலை
> ஆரியந் தமிழால் நேரிதி னடக்கி
> உலகின் றோற்றமும் ஊழியி னிறுதியும்
> வகைசா றொண்ணூற் றாறுவாதியரும்[2]

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10 According to Indra Manuel (private communication), the above portion of the *Tolkāppiyam* may be summarized as follows: *Vaṉappu* is the term used by Tolkappiyaṉār as per the reading of Pērāciriyar to refer to the final eight organs of poetry enumerated by Tolkāppiyaṉār in the first *sūtra* of the *Ceyyuḷiyal*. These eight deal with the characteristics that are commonly found in *toṭarnilaiccceyyuḷ* (narrative poem or epic poem), i.e., poems other than single stanzas. These represent certain forms of elegance in poetry. *Ammai* – brevity and sereneity; *aḻaku* – use of poetic words; *toṉmai* – ancient story recited in verse mingled with prose; *tōl* - exalted theme and melodious language; *viruntu* – novelty in composition; *iyaipu* – the use of the same consonant to close all the sections; *pulaṉ* and *iḻaipu* – choice of sounds and prosodic feet are the criteria involved in the definition of these eight.

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வேத நாவினர்[3] வேதியரொழுக்கமும்
ஆதிக்காலத் தரசர் செய்தியும்[4]
அவ்வளர்[5] நாட்டால் அறியு மாற்றலும்
ஆடியும் பாடியும்[6] அறிவு வரக்கிளத்தல் (*Cēntaṉ Tivākaram, p. 309)*
[Variants:[1] விளம்பிய இயற்கை, விளம்பனத்தியற்கை (விடம்பனம்),[2] அலகுசால் தொண்ணூற்றறுவர தியற்கையும்,[3] வேத நாவின்,[4] அரசரதியற்கையும்,[5] அவ்வவர்,[6] அறிவர]

kāviya viyaṟkai[1] virikkuṅkālai
āriyan tamiḻāl nēritiṉ aṭakki
ulakiṉ ṟōṟṟamum ūḻiyiṉ iṟutiyum
vakaicā ṟoṇṇūṟ ṟāṟuvātiyarum[2]
vēta nāviṉar[3] vētiyaroḻukkamum
ātikkālat taracar ceytiyum[4]
avvaḷar[5] nāṭṭāl aṟiyu māṟṟalum
āṭiyum pāṭiyum[6] aṟivu varakkiḷattal.
[Variants:[1] *viḷampiya iyaṟkai, viḷampaṉattiyaṟkai* (*viṭampaṉam*),[2] *alakucāl toṇṇūṟṟaṟuvara tiyaṟkaiyum,*[3] *vēta nāviṉ,*[4] *aracaratiyaṟkaiyum,*[5] *avvavar,*[6] *aṟivara*]

"When the nature of *kāvyas/viṭampaṉam* is described, (it is like this:) it is composed including appropriately in *āriyam* (Sanskrit) and Tamil the origin of the world, the endings of epochs, the classification of the ninety-six types of people and so forth, the conduct of Brahmins who have the Veda on their tongue, the information relating to the ancient kings, the capacity to understand the knowledge of the above through their different countries/places/locales and narrates (these) to enable others to gain knowledge through the acts of dancing and singing."

The above verse has several variant readings and seems to define an epic. The phrase *āṭiyum pāṭiyum* poses a difficulty. Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai thinks that it might have defined a dance/drama variety called *viṭampaṉam* according to another textual variant found in the *Yāpparuṅkalavirutti* (eleventh century) (*sūtra* no. 96) (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957, 13–15). However, we can surmise that Purāṇic subjects might have been enacted with dance/drama and song. The *Pūmpuliyūr nāṭakam* of the twelfth century, which is no longer extant, might have been such a piece.

Pāṭṭiyal works (treatises on literary genre) also use the terms *kāppiyam* (long narrative poems) and *purāṇam* synonymously. The *Veṇpāppāṭṭiyal* (twelfth century) defines *kāppiyam* and *purāṇam* as defective in the four *puruṣārthas* (*uṟutipporuḷ*, "objectives worthy of human pursuit") and states that the *purāṇas* in particular should describe the history of dynasties (*kulavaravu*, cf. *vaṃśānucarita*) in the *kārikai* (*kaṭṭaḷaikkalittuṟai*) meter. But no such work is extant now. The *Citamparappāṭṭiyal* (sixteenth century) and the *Pirapanta marapiyal* (eighteenth century) closely follow the *Veṇpāppāṭṭiyal*. For the *Toṉṉūl viḷakkam* (eighteenth century), *kāppiyam* and *purāṇam* are the same but the latter should narrate several stories. All of this

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seems to indicate that Purāṇic materials have been composed in the form of epics (Subramanian 1978, 453–457; see Readings 1).

4.2 Definition of the *Sthalapurāṇas*

There is no specific definition available for *sthalapurāṇas* in these grammatical works, but the definition for *purāṇas* in general might have been applied to *sthalapurāṇas*, too. It is not clear whether the phrase *avvalar* (*avvavar*) *nāṭṭālaṟiyum āṟṟal*, "to understand the knowledge of the above through their different countries/ places or locale" in the *Cēntaṉ Tivākaram* refers to *sthalapurāṇas*.

Sthalapurāṇas differ from *purāṇas* in their selection of content features and also in quantity. While the *purāṇas* conform to the fivefold definition (*pañcalakṣaṇa*) described above, the *sthalapurāṇas* have a restricted scope, i.e., they concentrate on *mūrti* (the presiding deity), *sthala* (locale) and *tīrtha* (sacred waterbodies) only. *Sthalapurāṇas* focus on a place, its history, geography, legends, traditions, etc., but many of the *sthalapurāṇa* materials are taken from *purāṇas* and modelled on them.

Ūriṉṉicai (a eulogistic poem describing the town of the hero in fifty, seventy or ninety *iṉṉicai-veṇpā* verses), *ūrnēricai* (a poem incorporating the name of the hero's town containing fifty, seventy, or ninty *nēricai-veṇpā* verses written in eulogy of the town or place of residence of the hero) and *ūrveṇpā* (eulogistic poem describing the town of the hero, in ten *veṇpā* verses), the literary genres connected with hero's place, might have developed in the course of time into *sthalapurāṇas*. However, the nature of these genres is not known except that they glorify a place (Subramanian 1978, 453–457).

4.3 Structure of the *Sthalapurāṇas*

4.3.1 Common Structural Features

Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* follow a common structure. Generally, all works begin with the following chapters:

1. *Kāppu* – invocation for safety
2. *Kaṭavulvāḻttu* – invocation of different deities
3. *Avaiyaṭakkam* – apologetic preface
4. *Tirunāṭṭuccarukkam* – chapter on the country
5. *Tirunakaraccarukkam* – chapter on the city
6. *Naimicāraṇyaccarukkam* – chapter on the Naimiśa forest
7. *Purāṇavaralāṟu/payaṉ* – chapter on the history of the narration or the benefits (gained through reciting the text)
8. *Tirunaticcarukkam* – chapter on the river
9. *Talamakimaiccarukkam* – chapter on the legendary/mythical significance of the city
10. *Mūrtti vicēṭaccarukkam* – chapter on the significance of the presiding deity

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Most of the chapters (except 6, 7, 9, and 10) are common to works of the *kāppiyam* genre, too. The order and the remaining chapters may change from one *purāṇa* to another.

4.3.2 Division and Size of the *Sthalapurāṇas*

The *sthalapurāṇas* are divided into chapters known as *carukkam* (e.g., *Cētuppurāṇam*), *paṭalam*, *māṉmiyam* (e.g., *Ceṉṉimalaitalapurāṇam*), *attiyāyam*, (e.g., *Kōlācala stalapurāṇam*), etc. Some *purāṇas* also contain a larger division into *kāṇtams* (parts), e.g.:

> Parañcōti's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam: maturaikkāṇṭam / kūṭaṟkāṇṭam / ālavāykkāṇṭam*
> *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam: kirutakāṇtam / tirētakāṇtam / tuvāparakāṇtam / kalikāṇṭam*
> *Cuntarapāṇṭiyam: uṟpattiyakāṇtam / tikkuvicayakāṇtam / ukkirakāṇtam / līlakāṇṭam.*

Nellaiyappa Kavirāyar's *Tirunelvēlit talapurāṇam* has 120 *carukkams*. Mināṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai's *Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam* contains sixty-one *carukkams* and the *Ceṉṉimalait talapurāṇam* is divided into six *māṉmiyams*. Among the *sthalapurāṇas*, the *Tirunelvēlippurāṇam* is the largest with 6912 verses and the *Kavacaippurāṇam* the smallest with 193 verses.

4.3.3 Metre

Even though the *kaṭṭaḷaikkalittuṟai* metre is mentioned as proper for the *purāṇas* by the *Veṇpāppāṭṭiyal* (see above), no *purāṇa* composed in this metre is available. Different types of the *viruttappā* metre are widely used. *Kīrttaṉai* (*Tirumeyyam Īsvaraṉpēril stalapurāṇak kīrttaṉai*) and *kummi* songs (*Rāmēsvaram Tīrttamūrtti visēṣa rattinam*) are also rarely used.

4.4 Other Characteristics of *Sthalapurāṇas*

Since *sthalapurāṇas* are modelled on both epics and *purāṇas*, they contain the elements of an epic that are enumerated by the poetician Taṇṭi and others.

4.4.1 Plot Structure

The story of the *sthalapurāṇas* is not a connected and cogent one and so there is no plot structure worth the name. It is more episodic in nature. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of *sthalapurāṇas*.

4.4.2 Sources of the *Sthalapurāṇas*

All the Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* claim a source in one of the *mahāpurāṇas* or *sthalapurāṇas* in Sanskrit:

Table 2: Tamil *Sthalapurāṇas* and their sources

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No.	*Sthalapurāṇas*	Source in Sanskrit
1.	Nampi's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*	*Uttaramahāpurāṇa*, *Sārasamuccaya* (not extant)
2.	Parañcōti's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*	*Skandapurāṇa, Śaṅkara-* (*Agastya-*) *saṃhitā, Hālāsyamāhātmya*
3.	*Kaṭampavaṉapurāṇam*	*Katampavanapurāṇa* (*Nipāraṇyamāhātmya*)
4.	*Kūṭaṟpurāṇam*	*Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, *Kṣētramāhātmyakhaṇḍa*, chapters 82–93
5.	*Pērūrppurāṇam*	*Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, Kaumārasaṃhitā, Kumārakhaṇḍa*
6.	*Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam*	*Śaivapurāṇa, Sanatkumārasaṃhitā, Uparipaṭalam*
7.	*Kōlācalastalapurāṇam*	*Liṅgapurāṇa*, chapters 101–133
8.	*Tirukkuṟṟālappurāṇam*	*Dānavaibhavakhāṇḍa*, chapter 18
9.	*Avinācippurāṇam*	*Skandapurāṇa, Śivamāhātmyakhaṇḍa*, chapter 60

In some cases the purported Sanskrit original is not available. Even in Sanskrit, there will be many sources for a *sthalapurāṇa*. Even though all the *purāṇas* claim to have a Sanskrit source, no Sanskrit versions refer to any Tamil original source. It is a fact that many of the accounts in the *sthalapurāṇas* belonged to Tamil oral or written versions, but because of the perceived religious superiority of Sanskrit, even original Tamil works felt proud in calling themselves as translations or adaptations. This should be taken as an expression of authority and should be treated as overdoing a convention. The claim and extent of Sanskrit borrowing needs a closer study. The *Śivalīlārṇava*, a Maturai *sthalapurāṇa* in Sanskrit by Nīlakaṇṭha Dīkṣitar (seventeenth century) follows the Tamil works on *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*. There are also works in Telugu, Kannada (*Hālāsya* by Venkatesh of the eighteenth century) and Malayalam (*Hālāsyamāhātmyam* by Chathukutty Mannadiyar) that give the stories of the *Hālāsyamāhātmya* closely following the Sanskrit text.

4.4.3 History of the Transmission of the Narration of the *Sthalapurāṇas*

Most of the *sthalapurāṇas* also claim that they have been transmitted from Śiva through several intermediaries like the following:

Śivapurāṇas	*Viṣṇupurāṇas*
1. Śiva	Nārāyaṇa
2. Pārvatī	Brahmā
3. Murukaṉ	
4. Nandi	
5. Nārada	
6. Vyāsa	
7. Vālmīki	

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8. Sūta
9. Eccar
10. Agastya
11. The sages in the Naimiśa forest
12. The sages in Kāśī

The order through which the story was transmitted may vary slightly as in the case of the *Tirunākaikkārōṇappurāṇam* (Pārvatī narrating to Śiva) and the *Pērūrppurāṇam* (Murukaṉ to Vyāsa through Nandi and Nārada). Nampi and Parañcōti say that the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* was finally retold by Agastya. The *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam* was told by Nārāyaṇa through Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsa and Sūta to the sages in the Naimiśa forest. The *Kōlācalatalapurāṇam* was narrated by Vyāsa.

In the introductory part of each *sthalapurāṇa*, Sūta enters the the Naimiśa forest, which was created by Brahmā with his *cakra* for the rishis. On the kind request of the rishis, Sūta begins to narrate the story of one of the holy places for the benefit of the rishis. There are interruptions and questions by the fellow rishis, who are the audience to the discourse.

The earliest *sthalapurāṇas* mostly follow this model. But the later *sthalapurāṇas* vary much in these details. The *Ceṉṉimalaittalapurāṇam* (eighteenth century) narrates that it was found written on a copper plate in Kāñcipuram and was revealed by Lord Murukaṉ to one Caravaṇamuṉivar, who later built a temple and established a city. It tries to integrate Purāṇic and traditional accounts and purports to be historical. The modern *Aṉṉiyūrttalapurāṇam* (twentieth century) straight away narrates the mythical, legendary and other traditional accounts without the regular puranic introduction.

4.4.4 *Sthalapurāṇa* Stories and their Classification

All the *purāṇas* purport to give the history of a place through four *yugas*. The history is narrated in several stories and these stories are of different kinds. Basically these local legends are either etiological or etymological. The former type of stories explains the origin of natural features, customs, etc. and the latter explains the origin of names.[11]

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11 In the works *Motif index of Folk Literature* (Thompson 1955–58) and *The Oral Tales of India* (Thompson and Balys 1958), these types of stories are listed under the mythological motifs (A 600 – 899 – Cosmogony and Cosmology; 900 – A 999 – Topographical features). The motif No. A 1617 in these two works, is about the origin of place names. The different Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* stories have been subjected to a structural study by scholars of the Department of Tamil, University of Kerala, Kariavattom under the guidance of K. Nachimuthu (Nachimuthu 1976, 1981; Sankari 1976; Vijayalakshmi 1977; Lalitha 1978).

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Local legends

Etiological	Etymological
Explain natural features, customs	Explain names

The stories can be further classified as follows:

Table 3: *Sthalapurāṇa* stories and their classification

No.	Story type	Characters	*Yuga*	Example
1.	Myths	Gods, goddesses (e.g., Śiva, Pārvatī, Indra, Viṣṇu, Vāyu)	Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara	*Tatāṭakai varalāṟu*, *Intiran pali tīrttal*, *avatāra stories*, Vāyu-Vāsuki rivalry
2.	Myths	Ṛṣis, Asuras, Vāsuki, celestials, rivers, etc.	Dvāpara	Patañjali, Rāvaṇa, Kuṇḍodara, Ahalyā, Kamalinī, Aninditā, Gaṅgā
3.	Legends (mythical)	Mythical kings	Treta, Dvāpara, Kali	Malayattuvacaṉ, Mucukuntaṉ, Cipi, etc.
4.	Legends and tradition (historical)	Kings, saints	Kali	Ceramāṉperumāḷ, Varakuṇaṉ, Nakkīrar Periyāḻvār, Māṇikkavācakar
5.	Folktales (fables, animal tales, fairy tales, etc.)	Sparrow, pig, stork, etc.	Kali	*Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*

4.4.5 Two Kinds of Mythological Stories: Constitution of a *Sthalapurāṇa* Complex

The mythological stories are of two kinds: (1) common or cosmopolitan and (2) local. Legendary stories are either mythical or historical. All these stories aim at religious, philosophical and moral teaching. Some of them are treated as allegorical (Hiraṇyakaśipu story, Sūrapadma story, Tripurāntaka story). These stories continuously received accretions over the periods. For example:

- In the mythological story explaining the name Paḻaṉi, the story of Avvaiyār is added in modern times in popular and film versions.

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- The Nakkīrar tale from the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* has been amplified with new motifs in the *Cīkāḷattippurāṇam* (seventeenth century) (Nachimuthu 1976).
- A new motif of the visit of Cuntararmūrtti Nāyaṉār to Tuṭiyalūr (near Coimbatore) is found in the *Tuṭicaippurāṇam* (nineteenth century), but it is not found in the *Pērūrppurāṇam* (eighteenth century) or in the *Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam* (*Periyapurāṇam*) (twelfth century).
- A new motif of Śiva's visit in the guise of an untochable is added in the story of Cōmāci Māṟanāyaṉār in the *Amparppurāṇam* (Arunachalam 1977), but is not found the in *Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam* (*Periyapurāṇam*).

In these stories, we see mythology and legend intermingling. Generally, we see in these stories the opposition of good and bad and how they are mediated. Many of the *sthalapurāṇa* stories are intimately connected with the stories of the nearby famous temples (e.g., Paḷaṉi with Ceṉṉimalai in the Kongu Country; Kaṉṉiyākumari with Cucīntiram in Nāñcilnāṭu; Citamparam with Tiruvārūr in the Cōḷa country; Maturai with Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam in the Pāṇṭiya country) and they constitute a *sthalapurāṇa* complex (or cluster or network) of a particular area (Nachimuthu 1974, 21). This is a networking device by which later settlements and places tried to partake in the antiquity of the nearest famous centers. This also helped the less popular and local temples to link themselves with the major temple centers and to get a regional (or sub-regional) and sectarian identity. Sometimes the networking may be a reflection of the political and religious administrative control from above. Apart from this, common religious practices and festivals in the temples also foster an integration into the network.

The second kind of local stories reflects a local or native ambience for the devotees to feel empathy with the religious centers. The story of God becoming a member of a subaltern community as *paḷḷaṉ*, "male tiller," and *paḷḷi*, "female tiller," in the *Pērūrppurāṇam* and the distribution of stories among the different castes and groups in different *sthalapurāṇas* aim at a social integration in the context of religion and people. A story in Nampi's *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* about the rendering of justice in the Pāṇṭiya court with an etiology of a proverb is an interesting example for the absorbtion of folklore into the *purāṇas* (Reading 2.1).

4.4.6 Two streams of Folklore: Higher and Lower or Cosmopolitan and Local

As explained earlier these Purāṇic stories belong to the realm of folklore. Two streams of folklore join in these *purāṇas*. One belongs to the educated or higher folklore and the other the uneducated or lower (non-literate) folklore. The mythological accounts belong to the first variety and the other types to the second. Since the *purāṇas* have been influenced, modified and transformed by the higher folklore, it is very difficult to separate the one from the other. On the whole the literature is intended for the folk and so the folk motifs were accepted with due transformation.

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4.4.7 Characterization

Sthalapurāṇas being collections of short stories and episodes, the epic characterization is absent and whatever is available is only fragmentary and only in few cases we can see some examples worthy to remember (e.g., Nakkīrar, Tarumi and Vanti in the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*).

4.4.8 Hero of the Epic: Place as the Parallel Hero

The presiding deity is generally considered as the hero of the *sthalapurāṇa*, and the individual tales are connected through the heroism of the deity. But the adventures and deeds of the deity alone are not completely described. On the other hand, we see that the origin, growth, history and other manifold significance of the place are depicted in the *sthalapurāṇas*. Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to call the place the *parallel hero* or the *hero eulogized in the work* (*pāṭṭuṭaittalaivaṉ*) of the *sthalapurāṇa*, the main hero or *hero protagonist* being the presiding deity. This may be equated with the concept of *pāṭṭuṭaitalaivaṉ* (hero eulogized in the work or external hero of poetry) and *kiḷavittalaivaṉ* (the hero as a protagonist proper of the plot). In the *sthalapurāṇas*, the place or locale (*sthala*) is equal to the *pāṭṭuṭuṭaittalaivaṉ* and the presiding deity is equal to the *kiḷavittalaivaṉ*. Parañcōti (seventeenth century), in his *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*, explicity declares that the god of Madurai, who himself is the Pāṇṭiya king, is the hero of the epic (*nakarappaṭalam* 108). Perumpaṟṟapuliyūr Nampi (thirteenth or sixteenth century), in his *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*, adds invocation verses to the Pāṇṭiya country and to Maturai. This deification of the country and the place by the two poets may be due to the nationalistic spirit in the midst of alien rule during their times. But literally it can be interpreted as denoting the external hero of the work (see Reading 3).

4.4.9 Other Elements

The other epic elements like four *puruṣārthas*, descriptions of the country, city, river, sun, moon, reasons, etc. are vividly added in the *sthalapurāṇas* like in any other epic. In fact, many poets displayed their skill in imageries, and narration in the sections dealing with these elements (see Reading 1).

4.4.10 Imagery

The imagery of these poets is marked by mythical or supernatural imagination and fantasy. Even the natural descriptions are influenced by mythical elements. The mythical and the real world intermingle and create a world of fantasy. When we approach them with an open mind and heart, some of them are appealing and initiate in us an intense feeling of oneness with the gods and celestial beings at least in our mental word (see Reading 1).

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4.4.11 Style

The style of these works is archaic, imitative and difficult to understand and certainly it needs an exponent to interpret. Since most of the *purāṇas* were intended for oral discourse (*katāppiracaṅkam*) by an expert with an elaborate commentary and interpretation, they can afford to be like that. The *purāṇa* itself is narrated by a mythical story teller, Sūta.

The *purāṇas* contain many word plays and varieties of *collaṇi* (figures of speech based on words). There are also imageries pertaining to grammatical and philosophical concepts (see Reading 6.2). This was due to the fact that the *purāṇa* poets were great scholars too. Some of them wrote grammatical works (Vaittiyanāta Tēcikar, seventeenth century) and commentaries (Civañāṉa Muṉivar, 1753–1785; Nirampavaḻakiya Tēcikar, sixteenth century). Due to their erudition, these scholar-poets could not but betray their scholarship through these works (Selvanayakam 1965, 192–193).

5. *Sthalapurāṇas* and Other Disciplines

5.1 *Sthalapurāṇas* and Classical Literature

In the *sthalapurāṇa* age, classical literature and religious literature were learned side by side. The *sthalapurāṇa* poets tried to give a continuity to the old classical traditions by incorporating them in the *purāṇas* in form of imageries and in the plot structure (Murugavel 1975). For example, Kacciyappa Muṉivar introduces the old *akam* (love) and *puṟam* (war) concepts of Tamil poetics in his *Taṇikaippurāṇam* (*kaḷavuppaṭalam*, *cīparipūrṇanāmappaṭalam*) and employs images based on grammatical and philosophical concepts (see Reading 6).

5.2 *Sthalapurāṇas* and History

All the *sthalapurāṇas* pretend to give a history of the place from the religious point of view, which amounts to a remote knowledge of certain historical occurrences and personalities, highly influenced by mythical formula, and so they should not be relied on as such. A few exceptions exist like the *Tiruvilaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* of Maturai.

5.3 *Sthalapurāṇas* and Other Branches of Knowledge

As these *purāṇas* were also intended as "applied literature," other important branches of knowledge were elaborated in them, which is also a feature of epics (see Readings 4 and 6). Nampi's *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* (twenty-eight *nari kutiraiyāṉa tiruviḷaiyāṭal*) adds an account of horse breeding, just like the *Cilappatikāram* (third–fourth century) (fourteen *ūrkāṇkātai* 180–200) adds *ratnaparīkṣā* (gemmology). Some *purāṇas* explaining the rituals, ethical codes and philosophic ideas for the

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benefit of the common man, e.g., the summary of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta Āgama text *Civatarumōttaram* (sixteenth century) (see Reading 6) and a brief summary of Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy in the *Taṇikaippurāṇam* (chapter 8, *Nanti Upatēcappaṭalam*). In addition, many *sthalapurāṇas* are constructed as catechisms of tenets and practices of religion, theology and philosophy (e.g., *Taṇikaippurāṇam*, *Pērūrppurāṇam*, *Kāñcippurāṇam* of Kacciyappa Muṉivar, *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam*) (see Readings 4 and 6). It may be pointed out here that the last chapter, called *civapuṇṇiyappaṭalam* (total verses 121), in the first canto of the *Kāñcippurāṇam*, composed by Civañāṉa Muṉivar (1753–1785), has sections dealing with the iconography of twenty-one idols of Śiva (7–36), the construction and renovation of Śiva temples and the liturgical details of rituals (37–121). Civañāṉa Muṉivar's pupil Kacciyappa Muṉivar has also included similar portions in his *Pērūrppurāṇam* (*kālavaṉ vaḻipaṭu paṭalam, marutavaraippaṭalam* and *vicēṭa pūcaippaṭalam*). The cultural data from these *purāṇas* are also interesting and help us understand the cultural developments of different groups of people in different periods.

5.4 *Sthalapurāṇas* and Other Artistic Forms

Sthalapurāṇas have also intimate links with other artistic forms. The architecture, sculpture, paintings, dance, music and other literary genres are explained in these *purāṇas* and in turn the *sthalapurāṇa* accounts are illustrated and explained by these artistic forms (sculptures and icons in the temples).

5.5 *Sthalapurāṇas* and Other Contemporary Literary Genres

Sthalapurāṇas and the *prabhanda* works (shorter poetic genres) in Tamil literature were considered two offshoots of epic literature (Vaiyapuri Pillai 1957). A comparison of these two reveals something about the literary activities and milieu of those times.

The *sthalapurāṇas* describe *mūrti*, *sthala* and *tīrtha* with story content; the shorter *prabandha* works do the same, but with more literary flavour and with less story content. The former are more informative and the latter are more entertaining. The *sthalapurāṇas* consider the place as source for all other important things; the *prabandhas* derive the importance of the place from other sources. In the *prabandhas*, narration, description of nature, imagery, etc. are in most cases independent of any other purpose and they are intended for their own sake. But the *sthalapurāṇas* utilize them for teaching religion, morality, philosophy, etc. *Sthalapurāṇas* are mainly intended for recitation, but some of the *prabandhas* were also enacted as dance drama (*kuṟavañci*, *paḷḷu*, etc.).

There are three types of *prabandhas* viz: (1) *prabandhas* on kings and other human beings; (2) on gods and (3) on places. Among these three, the third type of *prabandhas* are more numerous than the other two (Subramanian 1978, 1984). For example, half of the *kōvai* works belong to the the third type (Hepzi Bai 1971,

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127ff.). This may also be the case with other *prabandhas*. This shows the literary milieu, which valued this type of literature as well as *sthalapurāṇas*.

6. Conclusion

In short, the *sthalapurāṇa* genre is an experiment in continuing the epic tradition in literature in combination with religion. It also belongs to folklore. It was a product of multiple historical factors. It is mythological in content and tries to be literary in other aspects. Its literary qualities entertained the elite and the story aspect the common man. It was highly applied in nature and it was educative too. Later, it became stereotyped and tended to be formulaic and less literary. At the same time, it gave sustenance and hope in life to the despondent and depressed. As such, it deserves a thoroughly new and sympathetic treatment in the hands of literary historians and critics.

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Part II: Readings (Excerpts) from Tamil *Sthalapurāṇas*

Introduction

The eight excerpts given below are selected from the poetical compositions of six famous Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* composed during the six hundred years between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries to illustrate the descriptions and generalizations made in the first part of this contribution. The selection covers both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava texts. Four examples are from the three *sthalapurāṇas* of Maturai. The remaining four are from the *sthalapurāṇas* of Mayilāṭuturai, Tiruvārūr and Tiruttaṇikai.

1. *Māyurappurāṇam* by Tiricirapuram Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815–1876), *tirunāṭṭuppaṭalam*, verse 61 (see Part I, 3.3.3, 3.3.5, 4.1). It illustrates the description of the richness of the locale, one of the topoi of the *mahākāvyas*, based on which model the Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* were composed. It also shows the romanticization of the past.
2. *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* by Perumparrappuliyūr Nampi (thirteenth century)
   2.1 *Paḷiyañciṉa tiruviḷaiyāṭal* (the sacred sport called God's fear of blame [or dereliction of duty], verses 6 and 30 (see Part I, 3.3.7). It is an example to illustrate how the *sthalapuraṇas* are valuable collections of religious legends and local folklore.
   2.2 *Kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu* (eulogy to the gods) (see Part I, 3.3.2). This example and the other one below (3) show how the authors of *sthalapurāṇas* on Maturai display a sense of patriotism to the Pāṇṭiya country and love for Tamil. They exihibit a form of Tamil linguistic nationalism with the Pāṇṭiya country as a epicenter of a larger Tamil country.
3. *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* by Parañcōti Muṉivar (seventeenth–eighteenth century) (see Part I, 3.3.2), *Pāṇṭittirunāṭṭuppaṭalam*, verses 64, 87 and 88 (see also the note above)
4. *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam* (author unknown) (ca. sixteenth century), *Meypporuḷ kūṟip poṟkiḷi peṟṟa paṭalam*, verses 24 and 25 (see Part I, 5.3). The excerpts here illustrate how the *sthalapurāṇas* are constructed as catechisms of tenets and practices of religion, theology and philosophy.
5. *Kamalālayacciṟappu* or *Tiruvārūrppurāṇam* by Maṟaiñāṉa Campantar (sixteenth century), verses 858 and 889 (see Part I, 3.3.4). The excerpt here shows how the *sthalapurāṇa* poets display their ideas of society in addition to the religious beliefs.
6. *Taṇikaippurāṇam* of Kacciyappa Muṉivar (d. 1790) (see Part I, 5.3)
   6.1. *Akattiyaṉ aruḷ peṟu paṭalam*, verse 393
   6.2. *Kaḷavup paṭalam*, verse 223
   The above two excerpts illustrate how the authors of the *sthalapurāṇas* conceive their work as compendiums of religion and literature in the epic model.

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1. *Māyurappurāṇam* by Tiricirapuram Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815–1876) (see Part I, 3.3.3, 3.3.5, 4.1)

This is a *sthalapurāṇa* in Tamil describing the legends of modern Mayilāṭuturai. The author of the work, Tiricirapuram Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, was one of the greatest Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* authors of the nineteenth century and the author of many such *sthalapuraṇas*.

The *tirunāṭṭuppaṭalam* or "chapter on the holy country" describes the different landscapes of the place as per the the poetical rules of a *mahākāvya* in Tamil poetics. The following verse describes the riverine landscape. The *sthalapurāṇa* poets display their poetical skills in describing such topoi. When they indulge in their flight of fancy, they always keep the religious or philosophical ambience in mind. In this piece, the poet combines the mundane and esoteric experiences equally.

Tirunāṭṭuppaṭalam, verse 61

உடைகரையடைத்துமள்ளரொருவழிச்செலுத்தலாலே
யடைமனுத்தகைக்கப்பட்டவரவெனவடங்கிச்சென்று
மிடைதருபொறிவாய்தோறும்விரைந்துபோய்ப்புகுமனம்போற்
புடையமர்மதகுதோறும்போய்ப்புகுந்ததுநீர்வெள்ளம்.

uṭaikaraiyaṭaittumaḷḷaroruvaḻicceluttalālē
yaṭaimaṉuttakaikkappaṭṭavaraveṉavaṭaṅkicceṉṟu
miṭaitarupoṟivāytōṟumviraintupōyppukumaṉampōṟ
puṭaiyamarmatakutōṟumpōyppukuntatunīrveḷḷam.

"Because of the peasant folks blocking the breached banks and channelising the flood water in a single channel, it flowed with obedience like a snake subdued by a group of human beings and reached and entered every sluice gates like the mind which enters quickly into every tormenting sense organ."

2. *Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* by Perumparrappuliyūr Nampi (thirteenth century)

This is the first extant *sthalapurāṇa* and also one of the earliest versions of the *sthalapurāṇas* on Maturai. The other well-known *sthalapurāṇa* on Maturai is the one by Parañcōti Muṉivar (sixteenth century), also called *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*.

Major portions in Tamil temple *sthalapurāṇas* are comprised of native Tamil folklore and local traditions in addition to the standard Sanskritic mythical lore. The different works known as *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* illustrate this phenomenon. The legends of Maturai narrate the 64 sports of Siva that are connected with the legends, history and folklore of Maturai. Nampi's composition is more direct in its narration, unlike Parañcōti who adds more details and poetic embellishments. All the *sthalapurāṇas* of Maturai are valuable collections of religious legends and local folklore. In

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addition, all the authors of *sthalapurāṇas* on Maturai display a sense of patriotism to the Pāṇṭiya country and a form of Tamil linguistic nationalism with the Pāṇṭiya country as a epicenter of a larger Tamil country.

2.1 *Paḻiyañciṉa tiruviḷaiyāṭal* (the sacred sport called God's fear of blame [or dereliction of duty]) (see Part I , 3.3.7)

The excerpt given here is from the thirty-third episode, called *paḻiyañciṉa tiruviḷaiyāṭal* (the sacred sport called God's fear of blame [or dereliction of duty]). It illustrates a strand of folklore about the facets of judicial investigations and the administration of justice in the Pāṇṭiya court.

Summary of the episode:

Once a Brahmin who was travelling with his wife to his father-in-law's home town left her in the middle of his journey under the shade of a banyan tree, in order to fetch water. While he was away, an arrow which had long hung suspended in the tree, in consequence of the latter being shaken by the wind, descended and penetrated the body of his wife, who instantly died. At that time, a hunter appeared in search of his catch at a distance. The Brahmin, on returning, was astonished to find his wife dead, looked round and discovered the hunter, charged him with the crime of murder, and took him along with him and his crying child, together with the body of his wife, to the court of the Pāṇṭiya king. The hunter, on investigation, maintained his innocence. The king ordered him to be put in prison, gave the Brahmin a present, and asked him go to cremate his wife's mortal remains. The king was in a dilemma to decide on the case. The king prayed to the god of Maturai that his doubt might be cleared. A celestial voice advised him to go in for the routine inspection of the city in the night so that the truth would be revealed. As per the god's bidding, the king went around the city in the night and he noticed two dreadful figures sitting on the veranda (*tiṇṇai*) of a house of a bachelor, where his wedding was arranged. The king watched them in disguise and overheard their conversation about their plans to take the life of the groom tonight. Having mustered strength, the king came out openly and approached them requesting them to reveal their identity. He further asked how they were going to take away the life of the bridegroom when his marriage was being held. The dreadful two revealed their identity as the messengers of Yama, the god of death, and that they were on duty to take away the life of the groom on the orders of Yama. They also told him that they would accomplish this task by letting loose a bull from the cattle stall. They further narrated that, when it was scared by the sound of drums, it would enter the marriage hall and gorge to death the groom. On hearing this, the king went to the Brahmin and brought him to the scene so that the Brahmin could overhear the conversations of the messengers of Yama. The conversation between them was about the pretexts by which the messengers of Yama usually take away the life of people unawares. During their conversation, they mentioned many such earlier episodes from history including about the previous day killing of the

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wife of the Brahmin by a pretext, i.e., making an arrow struck earlier in a tree shot by a hunter fall on her chest due to the blowing of wind. On hearing this conversation, the Brahmin told the king that he would like to witness and confirm the impending calamity the messengers of Yama planned to inflict on the young bridegroom. And soon it happened as they had said earlier. Now the Brahmin was convinced. The king returned to the court and declared the innocence of the hunter and freed him to the satisfaction of all his ministers. The Brahmin was compensated with a purse to start a new life. Finally the king was saved from a great blame by the grace of Śiva of Maturai and from then on the God of Maturai was called with the sobriquet pa*l*iyañci*n*a cokka*n* 'the god Cokka*n* who feared the blame [or the derelection of duty].' From those days onwards, there came into being a proverb that goes thus: "The begging Brahmin's complaint has been abandoned/dismissed with the jumping of the hornless or dehorned cow".

The excerpt given here describes the dramatic dialogues between the king and hunter. It illustrates the narrative skill of the poet to make the *sthalapurāṇa* more as a literary piece than a mere informative one.

*Pa*l*iyañci*n*a tiruvi*l*aiyāṭal* (the sacred sport called God's fear of blame [or dereliction of duty]), verse 6:

வினையுறு வேடுவ நின்னைக் கொல்வதில்லை மெய்ப்பட நீ
செய்தியுரையென்னவேடன்
கனைகழற்றாண் மன்னவனே நீதி வேந்தே கருணையனே நாயடியேன் கொன்றதில்லை
மனுநெறியி னாராய்ந்து கொள்க வென்றுவணங்கியுடனடுங்கிவியர்த்துரைப்பக் கண்டு
தனதுளநொந் தருமறையோன் மனத்தகத்துத் தணியாத பெருந்துயரந்
தணியச்சொல்வான்.

*vi*n*aiyu*r*u vēṭuva ni*nn*aik kolvatillai meyppaṭa nī ceytiyurai ye*nn*avēṭa*n*
ka*n*aika*l*a*r*rāṇ ma*nn*ava*n*ē nīti vēntē karuṇaiya*n*ē nāyaṭiyē*n* ko*nr*atillai
ma*n*une*r*iyi *n*ārāyntu ko*l*ka ve*nr*uvaṇaṅkiyuṭa*n*aṭuṅkiviyartturaippak kaṇṭu
ta*n*atu*l*anon tarumaraiyō*n*ma*n*attakattut taṇiyāta peruntuyaran taṇiyaccolvā*n*.

"As the king said thus: 'O Hunter who is befallen with the sinful deed! I am not going to kill you. You tell me the fact truthfully.' The hunter, having bowed and shivering in body and sweating, said: 'O you king who has a foot/ankle wearing a clinking anklet (as a mark of bravery)! O you just king! O you full of compassion! I, being a slave like a dog, never killed (the Brahmin lady). You investigate it for yourself (and find out) through the law of Manu.' The king, having seen (the pathetic condition of the hunter), became pained in his heart and told the Brahmin the following words so that his unceasing great misery was reduced."

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Paḻiyañciṉa tiruviḷaiyāṭal (the sacred sport called God's fear of blame [or dereliction of duty]), verse 30:

முட்டிப் பார்ப்பான் முறையீடு
மொட்டைப் பசுவின் பாய்ச்சலொடும்
விட்டுப் போன தெனவின்றும்
வட்டத் தலத்து வழங்கியதே 30

muṭṭip pārppāṉ muṟaiyīṭu
moṭṭaip pacuviṉ pāyccaloṭum
viṭṭup pōṉa teṉaviṉṟum
vaṭṭat talattu vaḻaṅkiyatē.

"Even today it (the following proverb) is in use in and around this place: the begging Brahmin's complaint has been abandoned/dismissed with the jumping of the hornless or dehorned cow".

2.2 *Kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu* (eulogy to the gods) (see Part I, 3.3.2)

Kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu, verse 8 (the Pāṇṭiya country):

ஆவியந் தென்றல் வெற்பினகத்தியன் விரும்புந் தென்பால்
னாவலந் தீவம் போற்றி நாவலந் தீவந் தன்னுண்
மூவர்கட் கரியான் நிற்ப முத்தமிழ்ச் சங்கத் தெய்வப்
பாவலர் வீற்றிருக்கும் பாண்டிநன் னாடு போற்றி.

āviyan teṉṟal veṟpiṉ akattiyaṉ virumpun teṉpāl
ṉāvalan tīvam pōṟṟi nāvalan tīvan taṉṉuṉ
mūvarkaṭ kariyāṉ niṟpa muttamiḻc caṅkat teyvap
pāvalar vīṟṟirukkum pāṇṭinaṉ ṉāṭu pōṟṟi.

"Hail the Nāvalan Tīvam (Jambudvipa), which possesses the southern part, which is liked by Agastya who resides in the Potikai from where blows the nice fragrant southern breeze! Hail the Great Pāṇṭi Nāṭu, which is in this Nāvalan Tīvam (Jambudvīpa), in which the one who is preeminent among the Three (Rudra, Brahmā and Viṣṇu) (i.e., Śiva) rules over and the divine poets of the threefold Tamil reside majestically!"

Kaṭavuḷ vāḻttu, verse 9 (the city of Maturai)

தேனிமிருந் தொடை வாகைச் செழியர் குலம்விளங்க
வீனமில் பல் லுகங்கடொறு மிருநிலத்தி யாவரு முய்ய
வானபெரு நான்மறைக்கும் யரியயற்குந் தெரியாதார்
மானிடராய் விளையாடு மாமதுரை நகர் போற்றி.

tēṉimirun toṭai vākaic ceḻiyar kulamviḷaṅka
vīṉamil pal lukaṅkaṭoṟu mirunilatti yāvaru muyya

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vāṉaperu nāṉmaṟaikkum yariyayaṟkun teriyātār
māṉiṭarāy viḷaiyāṭu māmaturai nakar pōṟṟi.
"Hail the great city of Maturai, where the one who is unfathomable for the very great Vedas and for Ari (Viṣṇu) and Ayaṉ (Brahma) and who sports as a human being so that the dynasty of the Ceḷiyar, who wear the garland of victory, swarmed by honey bees, prosper and all the people of this great world in many decadence-free epochs be redeemed!"

3. *Tiruviḷaiyātaṟpurāṇam* by Parañcōti Muṉivar (seventeenth–eighteenth century) (see Part I, 3.3.2)

Among the *sthalapurāṇas* of Maturai, the one by Parañcōti Muṉivar stands apart due to its length and also due to its literary embellishments. The author has taken pains to make it a complete epic. The other aspect of it is its passionate espousal of a nationalistic outlook.

It conceives the Pāṇṭiya land and the Tamil language as beautiful ladies and mothers. In the prefatory sections of this work, the author gives the description of the country and the capital city with rich imagery and attendant embellishments. This deification of the country and land may be due to the nationalistic spirit in the midst of alien rule during the seventeenth century CE. But literally it can be interpreted as denoting the external hero of the work (see Part I, 4.4.8).

The excerpts here illustrate his passion for his nation state that is the Pāṇṭiya country and his mother tongue Tamil. It seems the author throws up a subtle political message in addition to the celebration of the greatness of Śaivism. According to him, the Pāṇṭiya country is the stage for the lady Tamil, who was developed as equal to Sanskrit by Lord Śiva. In the Tamil academy at Maturai, Lord Śiva himself presided over it, and such a holy Tamil cannot be downgraded comparing it with the languages which have no standard grammars. This is an obvious reference to the dominance of Telugu and Kannada in the Vijayanagara and Nāyaka courts at Maturai, where Tamil had no seat.

Pāṇṭittirunāṭṭuppaṭalam, verse 64:

பின்னெவ னுரைப்ப தந்தப் பெருந்தமிழ் நாடாங்கன்னி
தன்னிடை யூர்க ளென்னு மவயவந் தாங்கச் செய்த
பொன்னியற் கலனே கோயின் மடமறப் புறநீர்ச் சாலை
இன்னமு தருத்து சாலை யெனவுருத் தரித்த தம்மா.

piṉṉeva ṉuraippa tantap peruntamiḻ nāṭāṅkaṉṉi
taṉṉiṭai yūrka ḷeṉṉu mavayavan tāṅkac ceyta
poṉṉiyaṟ kalaṉē kōyiṉ maṭamaṟap puṟanīrc cālai
iṉṉamu taruttu cālai yeṉavurut taritta tammā.

"Then what else to narrate? Oh! That great Tamil country called *kaṉṉi* (i.e., the Pāṇṭiya country as a lady) has taken shape/appeared with its cities and towns as

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its body parts and the temples, mutts, alms houses, feeding places and inns serving sweet food as the ornaments put on its body."

Pāṇṭittirunāṭṭuppaṭalam, verse 87:

விடையு கைத்தவன் பாணினிக் கிலக்கண மேனாள்
வடமொ ழிக்குரைத் தாங்கியன் மலயமா முனிக்குத்
திடமு றுத்தியம் மொழிக்கெதிர் ஆக்கிய தென்சொன்
மடம கட்கரங் கென்பது வழுதிநா டன்றோ.

viṭaiyu kaittavaṉ pāṇiṉik kilakkaṇa mēṉāḷ
vaṭamo ḻikkurait tāṅkiyaṉ malayamā muṉikkut
tiṭamu ṟuttiyam moḻikketir ākkiya teṉcoṉ
maṭama kaṭkaraṅ keṉpatu vaḻutinā ṭaṉṟō.

"Is it not that the country of Vaḻuti is the dancing forum for the young girl called Southern Word (i.e., Tamil), who was made an adversary to that language (i.e., Sanskrit) by the Lord who rode the ox, taught definitively the grammar of Tamil to the Sage of the Malaya mountains (Agastya), just like he taught Pāṇini the grammar of Sanskrit in earlier times?"

Pāṇṭittirunāṭṭuppaṭalam, verse 88:

கண்ணு தற்பெருங் கடவுளுங் கழகமோ டமர்ந்து
பண்ணு றத்தெரிந்து ஆய்ந்தவிப் பசுந்தமி ழேனை
மண்ணி டைச்சில விலக்கண வரம்பிலா மொழிபோல்
எண்ணி டைப் படக் கிடந்ததா வெண்ணவும் படுமோ.

kaṇṇu taṟperuṅ kaṭavuḷuṅ kaḻakamō ṭamarntu
paṇṇu ṟatterintu āyntavip pacuntami ḻēṉai
maṇṇi ṭaiccila vilakkaṇa varampilā moḻipōl
eṇṇi ṭaip paṭak kiṭantatā veṇṇavum paṭumō.

"Will this Tamil, which was studied deeply and systemically/musically even by the great god Śiva, who has the third eye on his forehead, sitting in the Tamil Academy along with other poets, be considered as one among/equal to the other few languages on the earth, which have no proper grammar of their own?"

4. *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam* (author unknown) (ca. sixteenth century) (see Part I, 5.3)

This is a Vaiṣṇava *sthalapurāṇa* of Maturai. Unlike the Śaivite *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇams* of Maturai, which are based on the episodes connected with the greatness of Śiva as the main presiding deity of the Ālavāyuṭaiyār temple and other Śiva devotees, it speaks the greatness of Viṣṇu as a presiding deity at Kūṭalaḻakar temple and the Viṣṇu devotees. In an effort to imitate the Śaivite narratives, this work invents episodes with motifs of *cintācamutti* (a skill of composing a stanza guessing the idea

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in mind of the proposer) and *Maturai Tamiḻ Caṅkam*, similar to the motifs in the popular Nakkīrar Episode in the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam*. In the *Kūṭaṟpurāṇam*, the Pāṇṭiya king had a doubt about who is the supreme god and he wanted an answer from the scholars of his country. For that he announced a prize of a purse of gold coins which was hung in the court to be won by the contestants after giving the correct answer that the king had in mind. The great Periyāḻvār or Viṣṇucittaṉ of Srivillipputtūr was invited to give the correct answer. He came to Maturai and gave the answer that Viṣṇu is the supreme god. It was accepted by Sarasvatī, and the purse went to him. The following excerpt describes this episode.

Meypporuḷ kūṟip poṟkiḻi peṟṟa paṭalam (chapter on winning the golden purse after giving the correct answer), verse 24:

பாசுர மிதனைத் தால பத்திரத் தெழுதிப்புத்தூர்
பூசுரனெடுத்தானன்னலாவணம்புறநூலோரை
மாசறத் துணிப்பான் சென்றவாளெனப் பிறங்கி யோடித்
தேசுறநிறுவும்விஞ்சைக் கிழித்தலைச் சிறந்ததன்றே.

pācura mitaṉait tāla pattirat teḻutipputtūr
pūcuraṉeṭuttāṉaṉṉalāvaṇampuṟanūlōrai
mācaṟat tuṇippāṉ ceṉṟavāḷeṉap piṟaṅki yōṭit
tēcuṟaniṟuvumviñcaik kiḻittalaic ciṟantataṉṟē.

"The Brahmin from Puttūr (Periyāḻvār), having written this verse on a palm leaf, presented it. That very good document ran shining like a sword that cuts without error the heretics and stood magnificently on the magical golden purse set up with splendor."

Meypporuḷ kūṟip poṟkiḻi peṟṟa paṭalam (chapter on winning the golden purse after giving the correct answer), verse 25:

அத்தலை யமர்ந்த தேவராவணமது கைக் கொண்டு
மொய்த்தனர்மகிழ்ச்சி தூங்கமுனிவரர் குழாங்களோடுஞ்
சத்தியவாணியென்னும் சாரதாதேவி தோன்றி
வித்தகக் கிழியைப் பட்டர்வேந்தன் கைக்களித்தாளன்றே.

attalai yamarnta tēvarāvaṇamatu kaik koṇṭu
moyttaṉarmakiḻcci tūṅkamuṉivarar kuḻāṅkaḷōṭuñ
cattiyavāṇiyeṉṉum cāratātēvi tōṉṟi
vittakak kiḻiyaip paṭṭarvēntaṉ kaikkaḷittāḷaṉṟē.

"The celestials who sat at that spot took up that document in their hands and gathered with rejoice abound together with the groups of sages. At that juncture, Śāradādevī alias Cattiyavāṇi appeared and handed over the wonderful purse to the hands of the king of Brahmins (i.e., Periyāḻvār)."

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5. *Kamalālayacciṟappu* or *Tiruvārūrppurāṇam* by Maṟaiñāṉa Campantar (sixteenth century) (see Part I, 3.3.4)

This is a *sthalapurāṇa* on Tiruvārūr written by Maṟaiñāṉa Campantar (sixteenth century). He is a well know theologian and philosopher and author of many works connected with the Śaiva Āgamas and the religious practices of Śaiva Siddhānta. His most notable work is the translation of the Sanskrit *Śivadharmottara* into Tamil, called *Civatarumōttaram*. He is a good scholar-poet and authored two *sthalapurāṇas*, this one on Tiruvārūr and another on Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, called *Aruṇakiripurāṇam*. As he was a theologian and philosopher, he included ideas from such domains in his *sthalapurāṇas*. Being orthodox and conservative, he was more concerned with the maintainance of the social order, which was constructed with the inbuilt ideas of caste inqualities, pollution and obscure practises. In this excerpt, which is from the twentieth chapter, called *caruvatīrttācirayaccarukkam*, he narrates an account of life in the different epochs. In the example here, he refers to the presence of foreign people and their rule. This could refer to the Muslims or Christians. He bemoans the fallen values. The high-caste people were stooping low and the lower caste people were getting arrogant. It shows how the *sthalapurāṇa* poets display their ideas of society in addition to the religious motifs.

Verse 858 (the ascendancy of foreigners):

பழித்துவை திகத்து நீதி பஞ்சராத்திரமுஞ் சேர்வார்
ஒழித்தலால் வைதிக த்தை யுணர்வற மிரண்டுங் குன்றி
இழப்பரா மிருந்த தேசம் புளினர் வந் தெதிர்ந்த போது
வழக்கறி யாத வந்த மறவருக் கொளிப்பர் மற்றென்.

paḻittuvai tikattu nīti pañcarāttiramuñ cērvār
oḻittalāl vaitika ttai yuṇarvaṟa miraṇṭuṅ kuṉṟi
iḻapparā mirunta tēcam puḷiṉar van tetirnta pōtu
vaḻakkaṟi yāta vanta maṟavaruk koḷippar maṟṟeṉ.

"Blaming the methods of Vaidikam, some people will join the Pañcarāttiram. Since they avoided the Vaidika path, they are languished in spirit and good deeds and loose their country or place where they lived. When the Puḷiṉar or foreigners confront them, they will hide from those wicked persons, who do not know the customs. What else can they do?"

Verse 889 (the arrogant behaviour of the lower caste people):

வேதிய ராதி யோர்க்கு விழைந்துசென் றேவற் செய்யார்
ஆதனத் திருப்பர் வந்தா லவரடி தொழாரு மஞ்சிப்
பூதல வேந்தர்க் காளாய்ப் புரப்பர் சூத்திரரும் பூமி
வாதையும் புரிவ ரந்த ணாளாரை மற்றை யாரும்.

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vētiya rāti yōrkku viḻaintuceṉ ṟēvaṟ ceyyār
ātaṉat tiruppar vantā lavaraṭi toḻāru mañcip
pūtala vēntark kāḷāyp purappar cūttirarum pūmi
vātaiyum puriva ranta ṇāḷārai maṟṟai yārum.

"The people of fourth caste (i.e., *śūdras*) will not do their duties with love to the Brahmins and so forth of the upper castes. They will take seats equal to them. When the people of upper castes come, they will not pay obesiance with fear. The *śūdras* will become the servants of the ruling kings and administer the land. All such others will also harass the Brahmins.

6. *Taṇikaippurāṇam* of Kacciyappa Muṉivar (d. 1790) (see Part I, 5.3)

Among the authors of hundreds of *sthalapurāṇas*, Kacciyappa Muṉivar (d. 1790) stands out as one of the most eminent and prolific authors due to his vast erudition and skill in poetical mastery. Scholars admire him as *Kavirākṣaṣa*, "a poetic giant." Kacciyappa Muṉivar, as a *kāvya* poet and an erudite scholar in Tamil grammar and Śaiva Siddhānta, made his compositions a repository of knowledge on literature and religion. They can be called compendiums of religion and literature in the epic model. He is an author of many works among which the *Taṇikaippurāṇam* is unique.

In the eight chapter of the *Taṇikaippurāṇam*, titled *nanti yupatēcap paṭalam*, a succinct summary of Śaiva Siddhānta tenets is described. In the ninth chapter, titled *akattiyaṉ aruḷ peṟu paṭalam*, consisting of a total of 513, verses a succint summary of the Tamil *Civatarumōttaram* composed by Maṟaiñāṉa Campantar (sixteenth century), a translation of the *Śivadharmottara*, one of the *upāgamas* of the Śaiva religion in Sanskrit, is presented in 366 verses (148–509). In the tenth chapter, titled *Cīpari-pūraṇa nāmap paṭalam*, the valour of Murukaṉ in his war against the *asuras* is described in the mould of the *puṟam* themes of old Tamil poetics. Similary the mould of *akam* themes is used in describing Murukaṉ's premarital love in the sixteenth chapter, titled *kaḷavup paṭalam*, and his marital love in the seventeenth chapter, titled *vaḷḷināyaki tirumaṇap paṭalam*.

The first excerpt illustrates the skill of summarising a large treatise in verse, and the second one his poetical skill as a scholar-poet.

6.1. *Akattiyaṉ aruḷ peṟu paṭalam*, verse 393

ஒருவரொரு தெருவினிறின் முகடொன்றில்வழுக்குண்
டோரைம்ப திடையறின்விற் கிடைமுப்ப திடையே
தெருவிலங்கி னப்பாலின் றொருபதிற்றொன் றேனைத்
தெருக்களுக்கு முப்பதுதண் டாலயத்துக் குண்டால்
அருமறையா திகடொடங்க லுடலெடுக்கு முன்ன
ரந்தணர்முன் னால்வர்க்கும் பிறப்பிறப்பின் வழுநான்
ஒருபதுபன் னிரண்டுபதி னாறுபதி னைந்த
மொழுக்கமிலாச் சூத்திரர்க்கு முப்பதிற்று நாளே.

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oruvaroru teruviṉiṟiṉ mukaṭoṉṟilvaḻukkuṇ
ṭōraimpa tiṭaiyaṟiṉviṟ kiṭaimuppa tiṭaiyē
teruvilaṅki ṉappāliṉ ṟorupatiṟṟoṉ ṟēṉait
terukkaḷukku muppatutaṇ ṭālayattuk kuṇṭāl
arumaṟaiyā tikaṭoṭaṅka luṭaleṭukku muṉṉa
rantaṇarmuṉ ṉālvarkkum piṟappiṟappiṉ vaḻunāṉ
orupatupaṉ ṉiraṇṭupati ṉāṟupati ṉaintā
moḻukkamilāc cūttirarkku muppatiṟṟu nāḷē.

"If a person dies [in his house] in a street [of a village], if the ridge of the roof [of the house of the deceased] is connected, there is defilement up to one [length of] fifty [bow-lengths]. If a gap intervenes, the defilement is thirty bow-lengths. In between, if a street intersects, there is no defilement beyond. For other streets, ten plus one bow-lengths, and for the temple there is [defilement] for thirty *taṇṭu*. Do not start reciting the precious Vedas and so forth before the body has been taken out. For all the four groups beginning from he Brahmins, defilement resulting from birth and death is of four types, namely for ten, twelve, sixteen and fifteen [days], they say, and for the *śūdras*, who do not follow the [āgamic] practices, it is thirty (*muppatiṟṟu*) days."

This corresponds to the verses 11.6–7 of the source text *Civatarumōttaram*.

6.2. *Kaḷavup paṭalam*, verse 223

The chapter 16, which is a long one with 520 verses, is like the minor literary genre called *kōvaikkalittuṟai* with a lot of innovations and embellishments. Kacciyappa Muṉivar proves to be a scholar-poet in this chapter. He makes beautiful similies and metaphors out of the grammatical lore of Tamil.

இருவருந்தணவா வியல்பிருதிறத்து
மருவியபாங்கி மதியுடம்படுத்தல்

iruvaruntaṇavā viyalpirutiṟattu
maruviyapāṅki matiyuṭampaṭuttal

The lady friend/the confidante of the heroine or of both the hero and heroine discovers the fact that they will not be separated.

அஃதாவது நடுங்கநாடிய தோழி இவ்விருவர் தன்மையினை இருவர் மாட்டும் ஒற்றித்துணர்ந்த தோழி வேற்படையையுடைய இவனுக்கும் இத்தலைவிக்கும் உயிரொன்றாயும் உடலிரண்டாயு முளவெனக் கூறா நிற்றல்.

aktāvatu naṭuṅkanāṭiya tōḻi ivviruvar taṉmaiyiṉai iruvar māṭṭum oṟṟittuṇarnta tōḻi vēṟpaṭaiyaiyuṭaiya ivaṉukkum ittalaivikkum uyiroṉṟāyum uṭaliraṇṭāyu muḷaveṉak kūṟā niṟṟal.

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I.e., the saying of the maid, who narrates a fictitious accident to make the heroine tremble for her lover's safety, seeks an open avowal of her clandestine marriage, having known closely the love between the hero and heroine that for them there are two bodies but one soul.

பன்னீ ருயிரும் பதினெண் ணுடலும் பயின்றியக்கும்
அந்நீ ரெனவடல் வேலோன் றனக்கு மமிழ்துயிர்க்கு
முந்நீர்த் தரள முறுவன் முரிபுரு வத்திவட்கும்
நன்னீ ருயிரொன்று மெய்யிரண் டாகி நயந்ததுவே.

paṉṉī ruyirum patiṉeṇ ṇuṭalum payiṉṟiyakkum
annī reṉavaṭal vēlōṉ ṟaṉakku mamiḻtuyirkku
munnīrt taraḷa muṟuvaṉ muripuru vattivaṭkum
naṉṉī ruyiroṉṟu meyyiraṇ ṭāki nayantatuvē.

"Like the twelve vowels and eighteen consonants are combined and pronounced as one syllable (*uyirmey*), for the hero, who is holding a ferocious spear, and the heroine, who has teeth like pearls from the ocean and bent eyebrows, the good-natured soul is one and the bodies are two perfectly."

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Innovations & Reformulations in Translation: Some *Sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil

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The Purāṇas constitute one of the oldest and major sources of ancient Indian cultural heritage. Based on the deep spiritual and widespread religious practices, this large corpus of texts records almost every aspect of Indian tradition since many centuries. As part of this corpus, there exists a subgroup of texts known as *sthalapurāṇa* or *sthalamāhātmya*. These texts speak about the innumerable holy places and the holy rivers on the Indian subcontinent. In fact, we find such descriptions of holy places even in the great epic *Mahābhārata* mostly in the section *Tīrthayātrāparvan*. The *sthalapurāṇas* present the religious background and antiquity of holy places, give an account of all the holy acts performed by the sages and great men of yore at that site, treat the various divine acts of blessings that happened there and list the merits (*puṇya*) that accrue to one who makes a pilgrimage to that site and other related facts. These texts are mainly used to be recited at those holy places in order to instill devotion in the minds of locals and pilgrims and instruct them to lead a dharmic life.

Many of these *sthalapurāṇas* claim to be part of the various *mahāpurāṇas*, although many actually enjoy an independent status. These Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* were also rendered, sometimes not verbatim, in vernacular languages. We may cite the examples of the *Vṛddhācalamāhātmya*, which is cited as an authority by Veḷḷiyampalavāṇat Tampirāṉ of the seventeenth century in his voluminous Tamil commentary *Ñāṉāvaraṇaviḷakkam māpāṭiyam* on his preceptor's text *Ñāṉāvaraṇaviḷakkam*. The *Brahmottarakhaṇḍa*, which is originally a part of the *Brahmakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandamahāpurāṇa*, has been rendered into Tamil verse by a later Pandya king Varatuṅkarāma Pāṇṭiyaṉ (ca. seventeenth century CE). There exist many *sthalapurāṇa* texts in Tamil, just as in other Indian vernaculars. Since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE we find many *sthalapurāṇa* texts in Tamil;[1] the authors of many of these texts clearly state that their sources are the earlier Sanskrit texts forming part of different Purāṇas and that they are rendering the Sanskrit original into Tamil so that more people can read and understand them and reap the religious benefits. The Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* literature found its culmination in the nineteenth century with the works of Makāvittuvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, an acclaimed Tamil scholar and a great poet of his time, who rendered many *sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil poetry, closely conforming to Tamil poetic conventions, yet based on their Sanskrit

1 For a study of Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* literature, see Shulman 1980.

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originals.[2] All these Tamil renderings contain verses and even separate sections conforming to different Tamil poetic conventions such as the description of the country (*tirunāṭṭuc ciṟappu*) in which the holy place is situated, the description of the town (*tirunakarac ciṟappu*), etc. In this way Makāvittuvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai elevated the Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* literature to a class by itself.

Nigamajñāna I, the author of the *Kamalālayac ciṟappu* (the Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* pertaining to the Śaiva holy place Tiruvārūr), presents us with his views on the origin and the purpose of the *sthalapurāṇas*. According to him, the Purāṇas were first taught by Śiva to Nandikeśvara in order to teach the four highest human ends (*puruṣārtha*) to human beings. This was then taught in turn to Sanatkumāra, who taught it to the sage Vyāsa. He in his turn divided them all into eighteen Purāṇas and expounded them to Sūta.[3] The aim of the Purāṇic lore according to Nigamajñāna I is to convey the *dharma* etc., so as to be understandable by women and low-born who reap the benefits by practicing them. This, implicitly, is also the aim of his adapting *sthalapurāṇas* into Tamil so that those who do not know the Sanskrit language can also benefit from these texts. In keeping with this objective, Nigamajñāna I describes the greatness of the Veda and its teaching, the highest benefits gained by following the Vedic teachings, the good effects of conforming oneself to virtuous life (*dharma*) and the bad effects of unrighteous deeds (*adharma*), performance of good and holy deeds (*puṇya*), observance of vows (*vrata*), possessing good and virtuous character, conforming strictly to the rules of conduct according to the class (*varṇa*) and one's stage in life (*āśrama*), the greatness of religious life and coexisting with the people of other religions without any rancour. On the whole the fundamental aim of these compositions is to ameliorate morally and spiritually the common man and instill devotion for the supreme god Śiva in him. Clearly, for Nigamajñāna I the *sthalapurāṇa* is not a mere "text of legends." He makes it to be a text of authority, a *śāstra*, and a sort of record (descriptive in nature but intended to be prescriptive) pertaining to human behavior and conduct, based on the Veda and the Śaiva lore. Nigamajñāna I appears to utilize the medium of the *sthalapurāṇa* to inculcate the importance and necessity of strictly conforming to Veda-Smṛti-Śaivāgama injunctions in all people. In what follows, an attempt is made to compare some texts of the *sthalapurāṇa* genre in Sanskrit and their Tamil adaptations to highlight the various differences as well

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2 Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai was also the teacher of U. Vē. Cāmiṉātaiyar, popularly called U. Vē. Cā. For more information on Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, see the biography by Cāmināṭaiyar (1933/34).

3 This view is also found in other texts such as the *Kōyiṟpurāṇam* (the *sthalapurāṇa* pertaining to the holy place Cidambaram) of Umāpati (ca. fourteenth century):

nātaṉarulpiriyāta nantitaraccaṉaṟkumaraṉ
vētaviyātaṉukkaḷikka meṉmaiyellāmavaṉviḷaṅkic
cūtamuṉitaṉakkutavac cōpāṉavakaitokutta
mūtaṟivālavaṉmoḻinta purāṇamavaimūvāṟil (*Kōyiṟpurāṇam* 1.24).

For a similar view cf. *Aruṇācalappurāṇam* by Caiva Ellappa Nāvalar (ca. seventeenth century CE), introductory verse 21.

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as innovations we find in the latter. The paper will refer to the *sthalapurāṇas* pertaining to the following holy places: Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, Kālahasti, and Cidambaram. These texts have been selected because these three holy sites are very ancient and have been sung by the Nāyaṉmārs such as Tiruñāṉacampantar (ca. sixth century). Moreover, the *sthalapurāṇas* of these holy places are available both in Sanskrit and in Tamil, at least some in the form of manuscripts within our reach.

Aruṇācalamāhātmya and *Aruṇakiripurāṇam*

There exists the Sanskrit text *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* (AM) forming part of the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* which is a part of the *Skandapurāṇa*.[4] The text deals with the holy place Tiruvaṇṇāmalai and is divided into two parts, *pūrvārdha* (AM1) and *uttarārdha* (AM2).

The *Aruṇakiripurāṇam* (AP) is a *sthalapurāṇa* in Tamil of this place which was authored by Nigamajñāna I.[5] He states in the introductory verse 27 of the AP that the main source of his composition is the portion that describes the greatness of Aruṇakiri which forms part of the *Sahasrakoṭirudrasaṃhitā* of the *Śaivapurāṇa*.[6] Then he lists various important events and deeds that are described in the AP, which he undertakes to compose. Although we do not find this portion of the *Śaivapurāṇa* now, we might compare the various events described in the AP with the AM, even though the AP does not claim to be based on the AM. For, these two texts share some narrative tropes, as some of the events and deeds dealt with in the AP are also delineated in the AM. These variations between the AM and the AP are possibly because the latter, as said by Nigamajñāna I, is a Tamil rendering of the *māhātmya* of the Aruṇācala as found narrated in the *Sahasrakoṭirudrasaṃhitā* (of the *Śivapurāṇa*) while the AM is part of the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*.

Thus, in the AM Śiva appears as a huge column of fire before Brahmā and Viṣṇu who are disputing among themselves as to who is greater/mightier among them. Viṣṇu takes the form of a wild boar (*varāha*), digs the ground very deep and even after many years of continuous digging is unable to find the end of the fire-column. Brahmā in the form of a *haṃsa* bird flies higher and higher but is unable to reach the head of the fire-column. Finally, both accept their defeat, fully understanding that

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4 See *Skandamahāpurāṇam of Shrimanmaharshi Krishnadvaipayana Vedavyasa: First Māheśvarakhaṇḍam*. In fact, the *Skandapurāṇa* contains many such *sthalamāhātmyas*.

5 There is another well-known Tamil Sthalapurāṇa on Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, namely the *Aruṇācalapurāṇam* authored by Caiva Ellappa Nāvalar (ca. seventeenth century).

6 It is very much probable that the *Śaivapurāṇa* is the same as the *Śivapurāṇa*, one of the eighteen *mahāpurāṇas*, which is available in print. There indeed exists a *Koṭirudrasaṃhitā* as part of the printed text of the *Śivapurāṇa*; this part deals extensively with the twelve *jyotirliṅgas* as well as the greatness of the śivaliṅga in many other places glorified by men. Thus it may not be implausible that this section contained some chapters dedicated to the holy place Aruṇagiri (= Aruṇācala) and that Nigamajñāna I was in possession of this text.

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the fire column is Aruṇācala, the mountain Aruṇa, and pray to Śiva, who grants them supreme knowledge. They fully realize that Śiva removed their pride and arrogance.

In the AP we find the same narrative. But here we find in addition Brahmā's statement that while he was flying higher and higher, he saw many sages and *siddhas* who ridiculed his failure in finding the head of the fire-column. They also told Brahmā that Viṣṇu, who went digging the ground in the form of a boar for many years, was unable to find the end (foot) of the column and that he had returned accepting his defeat. They advised Brahmā to do the same. Then Brahmā realized his mistake, regained his normal status and came back before the fire-column. Here, both Viṣṇu and Brahmā fully realized that it was Śiva, the source of all, who had appeared as a huge fire-column before them. They realized their own limitations and coming back to their senses, they sang hymns in praise of Śiva.[7]

In the AM1 Brahmā realizes his mistake and misadventure and says to himself: "It is impossible to realize Śiva by learning all the Vedas, or by doing severe penance or by doing pilgrimages; the *śivajñāna* dawns on a person only by the grace of Śiva."[8]

In the AP, the contents of the hymns sung by Brahmā and Viṣṇu in praise of Śiva (in the form of a fire column) clearly show the influence of *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* hymns. The verses describe the form and attire of Śiva, his various deeds such as destroying the Tripura demons, teaching the four Vedas to the sages seated under the banyan tree facing south (Dakṣiṇāmūrti), etc. It is especially noteworthy that Śiva is described as being neither male nor female nor eunuch both in the *Tēvāram*[9] and *Tiruvācakam* hymns as well as in the AP hymns sung by Brahmā and Viṣṇu. As stated at the beginning of this paper the fundamental aim of the *sthalapurāṇa* literature is to propagate supreme devotion and instill it in the minds of common people; to this end both the AM1 and the AP continue their narrative and especially the AP, through the realisation of Brahmā, clearly states that more than the aquisition of knowledge unflinching devotion to Śiva is the highest and the most efficacious means to realize him.

We can also find very close parallels between the AM and the AP. For instance, the verses[10]

> "Where all the Vedas, the Śāstras, arts and the Āgamas abide, in the most interior part of which mental cave the great sages with matted hair undergo severe penance ..."

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7 AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, vv. 12–26.

8 *na vedarāśivijñānāt tapastīrthaniṣevaṇāt* |
saṃjāyate śivajñānam asyaivānugrahādṛte | AM1 1.62cd–63.

9 *āṇalār peṇṇum allār atikai vīraṭṭaṇārē*; *Tēvāram*, 4.27.8.

10 *sarvāsām api vidyānāṃ kalānāṃ śāstrasampadām* |
āgamānāṃ ca vedānāṃ ca yatra satyavyavasthitiḥ |
yadguhāgahvarāntaḥsthā munayaḥ śaṃsitavratāḥ |
jaṭinaḥ samprakāśante koṭisūryāgnitejasaḥ | AM1 2.56–57.

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are very closely rendered into Tamil in AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, v. 55[11] as follows:

> "In this [Aruṇagiri] mountain the four Vedas, the twenty-eight Śaivāgamas and the eighteen Purāṇas will remain forever; those [sages] who have conquered their senses resort to this mountain and get freed from all the five-impurities."

We see that both the AM1 and AP drive home the point that the mountain Aruṇagiri is the repository of Vedas and all other scriptures and that the sages perform penance in the caves of this mountain through which they are blessed by the knowledge contained in these scriptures.

Being a Śaivasiddhānta preceptor of great repute and the author of some important Śaivasiddhānta texts and commentaries, Nigamajñāna I briefly speaks about the different types of *mukti*: the highest type of *mukti* (*paramukti*) and the lower type (*aparamukti*), attaining the world of Śiva (*sālokya*), living in the proximity of Śiva (*sāmīpya*), attaining the same form as that of Śiva (*sārūpya*) and attaining union with Śiva (*sāyujya*), as held in the Śaivasiddhānta system. In verses AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, vv. 57–59 he says that those who meditate on Aruṇācala as equal to the effulgence of thousands of suns in their centre of the heart as well as at the centre of their eyebrows will attain the *padamukti* and eventually attain the holy feet of supreme Śiva. As these views are not found in the AM, the AP differs in this respect substantially from the AM. Further in the AP the great services such as offering delicious food to the devotees and other Śaiva mendicants residing in the Aruṇagiri are extolled.[12] We can observe that the authors of the Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* texts, as exemplified by Nigamajñāna I, fully utilize the texts such as the AP to propagate *śivabhakti* along with conveying the Śaiva[siddhāṇta] view points in detail when the occasion arises.

Overall, the unparalleled greatness and the divinity of the Aruṇācala mountain and its surroundings are brought out in the AP, which states that all the words uttered by the people residing within the space of the Aruṇācala mountain are verily *mantras*; whatever act they perform is the worship of Paśupati (Śiva); whatever they think is nothing but meditation on Śiva; and sleeping is, in fact, remaining in deep meditative state (*samādhi*).[13]

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11 *ilaṅkumikkiriyileṉṟu miruk keḻuvāya vētaṅ*
kalantikaḷ nālēḷ mūvāṟeṇa navi nūlka ḷellām
pulaṅkaḷai veṉṟōr nantip poruppaṭi puṭaiyiṟ ṟaṅki
malaṅkaḷain tiṇaiyun tīrvar maṇattiṇiv varaiyai vaittē.
Similarly, AM1 2.59 and 60 are very closely rendered into Tamil in AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, vv. 56 and 57.

12 AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, vv. 63–64.

13 AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, v. 65.

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In the second part of *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* (*uttarārdha*; AM2) we also find quite a few chapters dealing with the greatness of Aruṇācala.[14] Thus, in AM2 (4.14) we read:

> "This [mountain] should be revered by the great sages more than the Sumeru, Kailāsa and Mandara mountains, since it is verily God Parameśvara."[15]

The superiority of the mountain Aruṇācala is also expressed in Tamil, with slight variation, in AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam*, v. 80:

> "The *siddhas*, sages and gods leave the Kailāsa mountain and settle at the [Aruṇācala] mountain with great devotion; they fully control their senses and thereby directly perceive the holy feet of Śiva. By the grace of Śiva they get their desires fulfilled."[16]

The Thirty-Two *Dharmas*

The AP in its second chapter, *aruntavaccarukkam*, vv. 20–32, describes in detail the penance, namely, regular worship of Śiva in the form of a *liṅga*, performed by Pārvatī at the holy place of Kāñci in order to regain her lost status and to remain inseparable from Śiva forever. The story narrated at the beginning of this chapter is, in brief, as follows: once Śiva along with Pārvatī goes to the beautiful garden on the Kailāsa mountain. Suddenly in a playful mood, Pārvatī closes the eyes of Śiva with her palm; since the sun and the moon, the two eyes of Śiva, are obstructed, the entire universe plunges into darkness and all the gods and the sages get confused. The sages complain to Śiva that they did not know the actual time of the day and eventually they could not perform their daily obligatory rites. Śiva asks Pārvatī why she, the supreme mother of all, created such a havoc. As an atonement for this blunder committed by her, Śiva tells Pārvatī that she has to live on earth, regularly perform the worship of a *śivaliṅga* under the mango tree on the banks of the river Kampā at the holy place of Kāñci.

The subject of the thirty-two *dharmas* performed by Pārvatī during her penance at Kāñci is introduced in the AP as a very important narrative, but is not found in the AM. There we only find in a single verse alluding to this narrative:

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14 Here the subject matter and the narrative are slightly different from the first part of the *Aruṇācalamāhātmya* (*pūrvārdha*; AM1).

15 *sumeror api kailāsādapy asau mandarād api* |
mānanīyo maharṣīṇāṃ yaḥ svayaṃ parameśvaraḥ | AM2 4.14.

16 *cittar muṉivar tēvarkaḷun tikaḻuṅ kayilai malainīṅkip*
pattiyuṭaṉē vantittap parama ṉaruṇakiri yaṭaintu
cittamorukkic civaṉaṭiyait tericittuḷḷu mavaṉaruḷār
ṟatta miṭṭa palamperuva rimmai taṉiṉun tavaṟaṟavē. AP, *aruṇācalōtayaccarukkam* v. 80.

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The Goddess (*devī*) followed the *dharma* by removing the fatigue of the living beings through planting trees, donation and by honouring all the guests.[17]

The background to this subject, namely, the incident of Pārvatī closing the eyes of Śiva with her palms and the eventual curse of Śiva, because of which she had to do penance at the holy place of Kāñci to regain her lost status, is described in detail in both the texts[18].

In the AM it is said that Pārvatī was performing the *dharma* by growing trees, making gifts to all human beings, by feeding the guests and by removing various troubles faced by the living beings. In contrast, in the AP, *aruntavaccarukkam*, vv. 52–55, we have a detailed list of thirty-two *dharmas* that Pārvatī performed during her penance on the banks of the Kampā river. They are:[19]

1. To provide a home for Vedic teachers,
2. To provide food for Vedic teachers,
3. To provide food for Vedic students,
4. To provide a home for Vedic students,
5. To provide a home for Śaiva Āgama teachers,
6. To provide food for Śaiva Āgama teachers,
7. To provide a home for the students of Śaiva Āgama,
8. To provide food for the students of Śaiva Āgama,
9. To provide shelter and food for the followers of *Vāma[tantras]*,
10. To provide shelter and food for the followers of *Bhairava[tantras]*,
11. To provide shelter and food for the followers of other types of Tantras,
12. To provide shelter and food for the followers of Jaina,
13. To provide shelter and food for the followers of Buddha,
14. To provide food for those who study and do research on Smṛti,
15. To provide food for those who study and do research on Itihāsa,
16. To provide food for those who study and do research on Purāṇa,
17. To provide food for those who study and do research on logic (*tarka*),
18. To provide food for those who study and do research on literature,
19. To provide food for those who study and do research on astronomy (*jyotiṣa*),
20. To provide food for those who study and do research on Siddhānta,
21. To provide food for those who study and do research on the Āyurveda,
22. To provide food for those who study and do research on music,
23. To provide food for those who study and do research on grammar,
24. To give grass to cows,
25. To give water to cows,

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17 *vṛkṣapraropaṇair dānair aśeṣātithipūjanaiḥ* |
śrāntiṃ harantī jīvānāṃ devī dharmam apālayat AM1 4.14[0].

18 AM, 3.24–69; AP, *aruntavaccarukkam*, vv. 20–34.

19 There is also another list of thirty-two *dharmas* (slightly different from the one found in the AP) mentioned in the *Aṟappaḷīcuracatakam*, composed by Ampalavāṇakkavirāyar of the eighteenth century.

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26. To give medicine for sick people,
27. To give milk for sick people,
28. To give oil for sick people,
29. To give milk for infants,
30. To provide dry ginger for pregnant women,
31. To provide castor oil for pregnant women,
32. To provide cow's milk for women who have delivered babies.

As we can observe, the list of *dharmas* provided in AP is elaborate and the list of beneficiaries covers a wide range of students studying different subjects and others who are in dire need of support such as the pregnant and lactating women. Also, the devotional hymns sung by Pārvatī after worshipping the *liṅga* are highlighted much more in the AP, where the author devotes four verses to this.[20]

In the chapter called *aruntavaccarukkam* of the AP, Nigamajñāna I describes the special worship performed by the goddess Pārvatī at Aruṇācala in the Tamil months of Aippaci, Kārttikai, etc. He says after installing special *liṅgas* at the base of the Aruṇācala mountain, Pārvatī worshipped them and started the festivals in the month of Kārttikai, which is very famous and well known nowadays.[21] This is not found in either section of the AM. Nigamajñāna I's source for this motive might have been the *māhātmya* from the *Śivapurāṇa*, which we are not able to access now.

As we can see from the passages analysed above, Nigamajñāna I never fails to inculcate some of the Śaivasiddhānta concepts. In the chapter called *valampuric-carukkam* of the AP, while recounting the various fruits that accrue to one who circumambulates the entire mountain of Aruṇācala (*valampurital* in Tamil), he says that those who circumambulate the Aruṇācala mountain without any desire to get the heavenly enjoyments (though they are entitled for them due to their devotion and the circumambulation) will not remain after death in the world of impure *tattvas* (*aśuddhatattva*) and the worlds of pure-cum-impure tattvas (*śuddhāśuddhatattva*), the enjoyments of which are not eternal. Rather, those persons will get the enjoyments in the worlds of pure *tattvas* (*śuddhatattva*), which are the highest. This in other words means that those selves will attain the status of the *vijñānākala* after which, during the great deluge (*mahāpralaya*), they attain the final liberation and abide forever in the lotus feet of Śiva.[22] Further, the author describes the five faces of Sadāśiva, namely Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora, Vāmadeva and Sadyojāta and their directions in AP vv. 24–25. According to the Āgamas of the Śuddhaśaiva system, Nigamajñāna I continues, in whichever direction the *liṅga* in a temple faces, the Dvārapālas should be worshipped as facing the same direction, while the *balipīṭha* and the bull (*vṛṣabha*) should face the opposite direction. In other words, they both

20 AP, *aruntavaccarukkam*, vv. 172–175.

21 On the festival, see L'Hernault and Reiniche 1999.

22 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, v. 21. For the *vijñānākala* type of selves and their highest status one may refer to the *Tattvaprakāśa* of Bhoja, v. 10 and its commentary *Vṛtti* by Aghoraśiva.

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should always face the *liṅga*.[23] The Tatpuruṣa face is known as the *karmasādākhya*, and the offering of food during worship should be done to the Tatpuruṣa face. The Aghora face is known as the *kartṛsādākhya*, the Sadyojāta face is known as the *mūrtasādākhya*, the Vāmadeva face as the *amūrtasādākhya* and the Īśāna face is known as the *śivasādākhya*.[24] The *karmasādākhya* is the most all-pervasive among the five *sādākhyas*; therefore, Nigamajñāna I says that all the other four faces merge in the *karmasādākhya*, namely, the Tatpuruṣa face whereas three, two faces and one face abide in the other four faces respectively. Consequently, Nigamajñāna I states that persons well versed in the Śaiva Āgamas (*kaṟṟōr* in Tamil) give food and other offerings in the Tatpuruṣa face during daily worship.[25]

In the AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, Nigamajñāna I gives some more details regarding different types of *liṅgas* such as *mānuṣa* (installed by humans), *ārṣa* (installed by sages), *daiva* (installed by gods), and those installed by the groups of semi-gods (*gaṇas*). He gives brief instructions to the *śuddhaśaivas* (those who are born in the category of *ādiśaiva* and have been initiated according to the Śaiva Āgamas) pertaining to the procedure of worship and the circumambulation of these types of *liṅgas* fully following the Śaiva Āgamas.[26] He also cautions against the formal worship done to these *liṅgas* by the other Śaivas such as those who follow the Vedas (*vaidika śaivas*) and the harm that such an act would bring to the nation and to the people.[27] Nigamajñāna I emphasizes that it is the duty of the king to oversee that this rule of the Śaiva Āgamas is fully followed in his kingdom by carrying out which the king attains to the world of Śiva.[28] Here it would be pertinent to draw attention to some

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23 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, v. 26.

24 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, v. 27.

25 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, v. 28. It is interesting to note in this connection that this view, namely, during worship the food and other offerings should be made in the Tatpuruṣa face of Sadāśiva, appears to be stressed very much both by Nigamajñāna I and his disciple Nigamajñāna II: in the voluminous compendium, *Ātmārthapūjāpaddhati*, compiled by Nigamajñāna II we find a long discussion on this topic. There Nigamajñāna II enters into a detailed discussion refuting the other view which holds that the food and other offerings should be done to the Īśāna face, the upward looking face of Sadāśiva; the proponents of this view are Nirmalamaṇi, the commentator of the *Kriyākramadyotikā*, the well-known Śaiva *paddhati* text authored by Aghoraśiva (twelfth century CE) as well as the anonymous commentator of the *Śivapūjāstava* of Jñānaśambhu (twelfth century CE). Nigamajñāna II firmly establishes by citing many passages from the Śaiva Āgama corpus that this view of some of the Śaiva *ācāryas* is against logic as well as against the tradition. What is interesting is that we find both the teacher and his disciple hold some important views and interpret some of the Śaiva concepts in the same way in many texts authored by them. For more such common views and interpretations of Śaiva concepts of both these Śaiva *ācāryas*, the reader can profitably consult Ganesan 2009.

26 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 29–31.

27 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, v. 32.

28 It would be relevant to mention here another text, the *Civatarumōttaram*, which is a Tamil adaptation in verse, of the original *Śivadharmottara* by Nigamajñāna I, for which literary

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personal details which Nigamajñāna II (nephew cum disciple of Nigamajñāna I) gives at the end of Dīkṣādarśa, one of his voluminous compilations. He states that his teacher (Nigamajñāna I, the author of the AP) had towers (*gopura*), etc. constructed for many temples when the great king Sadāśiva[rāya] was ruling the kingdom. He also says that his teacher established (installed ?) the Śaiva Āgamas in many holy places such as Cidambaram (Tillavana), Tiruvaṇṇāmalai (Aruṇādri), Vṛddhācalam, Tiruviṭaimarutūr (Madhyārjuna), Tiruveṇkāṭu (Śvetāraṇya) and Kumpakōṇam (Ghaṭapura) and many other places.[29] From this we can conclude that the statement of Nigamajñāna I in the AP "that it is the duty of the king to oversee that this rule of the Śaiva Āgamas is fully followed in his kingdom" is alluded by his disciple in his great compilation: that his teacher with the support of the king (Sadāśivarāya) had established the rule of the Śaiva Āgamas in some of the very important Śiva temples. In other words, Nigamajñāna I had carried out in his life time what he had said in the AP. As a corollary we can say that Nigamajñāna I was instrumental in starting various temple festivals (*utsavas*), especially the *Dīpam* festival[30] in the Tamil month of Kārttikai in the Tiruvaṇṇāmalai temple on the authority of the AP referred to above.

Nigamajñāna I concludes the discussion by stating that the initiated Śaivas should regularly worship the *śivaliṅga*, follow the instructions found in the *caryā°*, *kriyā°* and the *yogapādas* of the Śaiva Āgamas and then perform the circumambulation of the mountain of Aruṇācala, by which acts they will definitely attain to the worlds of Śiva and eventually attain liberation (*mukti*).[31]

We may also note with interest that Nigamajñāna I in the AP (*valampuriccarukkam*), briefly lists out various types of persons who, remaining at different distances from the temple, worship Śiva: he says some remain at the outskirts of the town and from there worship Śiva with devotion; others come inside, still others come near the temple tower and others come inside the temple and worship him with due devotion. Only those persons belonging to the *śuddhaśaiva* group that directly worship the *liṅga* follow the Śaiva scriptures.[32] Nigamajñāna I provides further information regarding the places (and the distance) from the temple remaining where persons belonging to various *varṇas* worship Śiva; in other words, these persons have to remain at these specific places and worship Śiva.[33]

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contribution he is very well known. In *Civatarumōttaram*, 1.23–24, Nigamajñāna I clearly states that the king, instructed by his preceptor, should strictly follow the rules of the *śivadharma* (broader term for all rules and conducts of a Śaiva) for the welfare of his kingdom which includes both personal as well as public rules and observances. Inspired by the king's conduct the subjects also would follow the same.

29 See Ganesan 2009, xi, fn. 11.

30 Nigamajñāna I mentions that Śiva instructs Pārvatī at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai to start this festival. Cf. AP, *aruntavaccarukkam*, v. 165.

31 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 36–37.

32 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 44–47.

33 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 48–55.

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Such information is not generally found in the *sthalapurāṇa* texts, especially in the Tamil versions. Nigamajñāna I mentions the rule to be followed by persons born in different *varṇas* who are supposed to stand at different distances from the temple (inside and outside) and worship Śiva.[34] He also gives practical instructions for doing the different types of obeisance (*namaskāra*) by men and women such as the *aṣṭāṅga*° and the *pañcāṅganamaskāra* by prostrating on the ground before the God in the temple. We also find instructions regarding the directions (*dik*) for doing the *namaskāra* in the temple depending on the direction that the main *liṅga* faces. Such instructions are not generally found in other texts.[35]

To conclude our discussion on the comparison of the AM1 (and the AM2) and the AP, we can say that the former, as part of a bigger Purāṇa, generally follows its style and content dealing with the legends related to the holy site in a formal way and giving the basic facts without much elaboration. The latter, the AP, on the other hand is more elaborate incorporating the local traditions and customs. This feature is more striking in the case of Nigamajñāna I, its author, who being a great Śaivasiddhānta teacher, uses the medium of the *sthalapurāṇa* to inculcate the importance of many of the basic principles of rituals and customs including some technical points discussed in the Śaiva Āgamas in the minds of the devout readers.[36]

Suvarṇamukharīmāhātmya and *Tirukkāḷattippurāṇam*

There are two Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmya* texts related to the holy place of Kālahasti, both available in manuscript form; these are the *Kālahastīśvaramāhātmya*[37] and the *Suvarṇamukharīmāhātmya* (SMM). For my present study I am only considering the SMM, since it is the source for the Tamil adapted text, the *Kāḷattipurāṇam* (TKP).[38]

The SMM is said to be a part of the *Tīrthakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa* and contains twenty-four chapters. These are: *arjunatīrthagamanam, bharadvājadarśanam, agastyadakṣiṇadiggamanam, suvarṇamukharījanmakathanam, snānapraśaṃsā,*

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34 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 48–55.

35 AP, *valampuriccarukkam*, vv. 63–66.

36 It would also be very rewarding if a detailed comparative study of the *sthalapurāṇa* of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, the AP and that of the Tiruvārūr, known as *Kamalālayacciṟappu*, also composed by Nigamajñāna I, were undertaken.

37 The *Kālahastīśvaramāhātmya* is available in the ms. RE. 26353. It begins with the seventy-sixth *adhyāya*:

yatra viṣṇvādayo devā munayaśca tapodhanāḥ |
yakṣakinnaragandharvasiddhavidyādharā api |
dānavā mānavāś cāpi tapaḥ kṛtvā śivājñayā |
sarve svalpena kālena babhūvuḥ prāptavāñchitāḥ |

The *Kālahastīśvaramāhātmya* ms. has the colophon: *iti śivarahasyasaṃgrahe romaśabharadvājasaṃvāde śrīkālahastisthalamāhātmye …*

38 The present study is based on T. 0704, the IFP paper transcript in Devanagari of the SMM.

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mārgatīrthadarśanam, viṣṇumāhātmyakathanam, varāhāvatārakathanam, śaṅkhāgastyavratacaryā, agastyaśaṅkhavaralābhaḥ, kaliṅgeśvaraprasaṃsā, paraśurāmatīrthaprasaṃsā, śivavaraprasaṃsā, nāradopadeśaḥ, paraśurāmeśvaraprasaṃsā, brahmavaralābhaḥ, kālahastivaralābhaḥ, śivamāhātmyakathanam, pañcākṣarītīrthavratakathanam, dvīpakathanam, jambūdvīpakathanam, karmanirūpaṇam, dharmakīrtanam and *āśramadharmakathanam.*

The *Tirukkāḷattippurāṇam* (TKP) is a Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* on Kālahasti, composed by the author Āṉantakkūttar. It is clearly based on the Sanskrit SMM. The editor of the TKP states in the footnote on p. 12 that the source (*mutaṉūl*) for the Tamil text is the SMM. The author himself says so under the subsection *nūlvaralāṟu*:[39]

> "Having taken a few chapters related to the greatness of the river Poṉmukali from the *Tīrthavaibhavakhaṇḍa*, which is part of the *Skandapurāṇa* ..."

He also states that he has added some materials from the *Sūtasaṃhitā* and the *Vāsiṣṭhalaiṅgapurāṇam*.[40] This example shows that in adapting the text, Tamil *sthalapurāṇas* make use of different Sanskrit texts. Moreover, Āṉantakkūttar says that in the presence (*canniti* = *sannidhi*) of Śiva at Kālahasti the elders kindly requested him to sing the glories of the holy city of Kāḷatti (Kālahasti) in the southern language (= Tamil).[41]

Though Āṉantakkūttar appears to closely follow the Sanskrit text of the SMM, we can find some variations. In the SMM[42] it is stated that great sages such as Śaunaka were performing a twelve-year-long *satra* sacrifice for the sake of the world in the holy Naimiṣa forest; there arrived the sage Ugraśravāḥ, the story-teller, son of Romaharṣaṇa and the disciple of the sage Vyāsa. In contrast, there seems to be no reference to the arrival of the sage Ugraśravāḥ, son of Romaharṣaṇa, in the TKP. Rather, at the end of this section in the TKP, we find that Sūta, beseeched by the

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39 *kānta nūliṉuṭ ṭīrttavai pavameṉuṅ kaṇṭat*
tēynta poṉmuka rikkatai yiṟcila veṭuttu. TKP v.1.

40 *cūta caṅkitai taṉṉilu miyaṉṟavai tokottu*
māto ṭaippaṭak kūṭṭupu vāciṭṭalaiṅkat
tēta miṉṟiya cilaterin tivaṟṟoṭu miyaittē
yāta rittakā ḷattimāṉ miyameṉa vaṟaintēṉ. (*nūlvaralāṟu* section) TKP v.2.

41 Cf. the section *nūliyaṟṟutaṟkuk kāraṇam*, p. 6, TKP v.1. One can find a parallel in the text of *Kamalālayacciṟappu* of Nigamajñāna I, v. 28:
arumaṟaikaḷoru nāṉku mākamaṅkaḷeḷu nāṉku maṅkamāṟun
teriyavā rāyntu paramāṉa teyvameṉat telintu caivar
poruvariya civaṉārūrp puṟṟiṭaṅkoṇṭa ruḷpurinta pukaḷāmellām
uraiceyumā riyattiṉatu poruṭṭamiḷā luṇarttuka veṉṟuraikkac colvām.

42 *pāvane naimiśāraṇye śaunakādyā maharṣayaḥ.*
cakrire lokarakṣārthaṃ satraṃ dvādaśavārṣikam.
tān abhyagacchat kathako vyāsaśiṣyo mahāmatiḥ.
munir ugraśravā nāma romaharṣaṇanandanaḥ. SMM p. 1.
Since the verses of the SMM in T. 0704 are not numbered I give the page number as reference.

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sages, started narrating the legend.[43] In the SMM text we do not find any other reference to the sage Ugraśravāḥ; in the Tamil text there is no mention of him at all.

In both texts the story begins with the episode of Arjuna going for pilgrimage (*tīrthayātrā*). The beginning part of this section is almost the same in both the texts. The Tamil text closely follows the SMM, as can be illustrated with the following example. Arjuna sets out for a pilgrimage as an expiation. Although Yudhiṣṭhira initially advises him not to do so, Arjuna convinces him and sets out from his palace. Ordered by Yudhiṣṭhira, his minister for treasuries and others followed Arjuna with sufficient money (gold coins) for his expenses and performing donations/gifts (*dāna*) during his pilgrimage. This event is well described in the SMM and is closely rendered into Tamil, too. The SMM states that Arjuna, after crossing the Gaṅgā, visits the holy city of Prayāga and then reaches the shores of the southern sea.[44] Then he visits the Mahānadī, the Puruṣottama[kṣetra], viz. [Jagannātha]purī, then comes to Siṃhācala and finally reaches the banks of the Godāvarī. From there Arjuna comes to Veṅkaṭācala after crossing the river Veṇā. In contrast, the TKP states that after worshipping Śiva at the holy city of Kāśī, Arjuna reaches the countries of the southern ocean. There he visits the Siṃhācala and directly reaches first the banks of Godāvarī and then Śrīśailam (Paruppatam). Then Arjuna crosses the river Vēkavati and reaches Vēṅkaṭam (Veṅkaṭācala). Here the mention of the river Vēkavati - instead of Veṇā, which is mentioned in the SMM - is a little confusing. Curiously the editor U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar in a footnote states that Vēkavati is one of the seven rivers that flow in the region of Kāñci. This would mean that Arjuna visited Kāñci before Vēṅkaṭam, which is not possible as Kāñci lies far south to Vēṅkaṭam.

The SMM describes the natural beauty and serene features of the banks of the holy river Suvarṇamukharī; we find interestingly some descriptions in a poetic way a not so common feature of many of the *sthalamāhātmyas*:

> "The Kaurava king [Arjuna] saw the holy *āśrama* of [sage] Bhāradvāja; [it was] surrounded on all sides by the trees [such as] the plantain, coconut, mango, *campaka*, *candana*, *takkola*, *aśoka*, palm, *ketaki*, pomegranate, blackberry, *kadamba*, *kataka*, cutch tree, *arjuna* and *pāṭala*. It was full of bees attracted by the unusual fragrance [of these trees]."[45]

Āṉantakkūttar, conforming to the Tamil poetic convention dedicates many verses in his TKP to describe the natural beauty of the place, where he uses many figures of speech. He states that all the five tracts of land (*aintiṇai*), namely *kuṟiñci*, *mullai*,

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43 *munibhiḥ prārthitaḥ sūtaḥ kathāṃ vaktuṃ pracakrame* SMM p. 1.

44 *āsasāda samuttālakallolaṃ dakṣiṇodadhim* | SMM, p. 5.

45 *puṇyam āśramam adrākṣīd bharadvājasya kauravaḥ* |
kadalīmārikelāmrakolakolacampakacandanaiḥ |
takkolāśokahintālatālaketakadāḍimaiḥ |
jambūkadambakatakakhadirārjunapāṭalaiḥ |
...
apūrvasaurabhākṛṣṭabhramarībhiḥ samantataḥ | SMM, pp. 6–8.[0].

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marutam, *neytal* and *pālai*, are present on both the banks of the river and describes each one of them.[46] Such poetic descriptions are one of the defining characteristics of the *sthalapurāṇa* literature in Tamil. As examples we may cite the *Kantapurāṇam*, *Tiruviḷaiyāṭaṟpurāṇam* and all the Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* compositions of Makāvittuvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai of the nineteenth century.[47]

The SMM in its second chapter deals with Arjuna's arrival at the hermitage of sage Bharadvāja after describing the scenic beauty of the banks of the Suvarṇamukharī river, the Kālahasti mountain and his worship of Śiva at the temple. The SMM devotes quite a few verses to the description of Bharadvāja's *āśrama* and the sage.[48] Here, the Tamil text is more elaborate in its description.[49]

From the close parallels between these two texts— the SMM and the TKP—it is very clear that the author of the TKP closely follows the SMM as stated by him at the beginning of the text. It is also evident that where necessary he also adopts the Tamil poetic conventions and includes Śaiva views, such as those pertaining to the holy ash (= *tirunīṟu*) following his predecessors (such as Nigamajñāna I) and taking these details from the *Sūtasaṃhitā* and the *Vāsiṣṭhalaiṅgapurāṇa* as he himself says.[50]

Cidambaramāhātmya and *Kōyiṟpurāṇam*

The *Cidambaramāhātmya* (CM) is said to be part of the *Skandapurāṇa* and speaks about the greatness of the holy place Cidambaram (well known as Tillai in Tamil).[51] Some of the chapters describe the penance performed by the sages Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda, their meeting at the holy place Cidambaram in order to witness the great divine dance of Śiva (Naṭarāja), etc. The Tamil text *Kōyiṟpurāṇam* (KoP) dealing with the legends related to Cidambaram (the temple of Naṭarāja is known as *kōyil*) is said to have been composed by the well-known Śaiva preceptor Umāpati (ca. fourteenth century CE). Though it is not yet certain that the KoP is Tamil rendering of CM, we do find some similar views and expressions in both of them.

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46 TKP, pp. 14–18.

47 For example, Makāvittuvāṉ Mīṉāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai dedicates ninety-five verses (vv. 26–120) to describe the five tracts of land (*aintiṇai*), namely *kuṟiñci*, *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytal* and *pālai*, in his poetic composition *Māyūrappurāṇam* (the *sthalapurāṇa* of the holy place of Māyūram, i.e., Mayilāṭuturai).

48 SMM, pp. 9–10.

49 TKP, pp. 24–27.

50 See footnote no. 40.

51 The present study is based on T. 0404, an IFP paper transcript in Devanāgarī of the CM. Since the verses are not numbered in the transcript, I give only the page number as reference.

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Similar views

In KoP 4.6, while describing the beginning of the dance of Śiva witnessed by all gods and sages including Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda, we find the following description:

> "They saw before them as if a huge mountain with one thousand moons arose, as if thousands of Vedic recitations, as if Bhānukampa with his thousand faces and two thousand hands was holding the conchs and reciting the *praṇavamantra*."[52]

Umāpati (in the KoP) goes on to say that "it appeared as if Baṇāsura with his thousand hands beat the drum (*kuṭamuḻā*), thereby raising the sound "'thom.'"[53] A parallel to this is found in the CM:

> "Bhānukampa, well known to be possessing thousand heads and resembling the king of mountains (Himālaya), started blowing a thousand conchs, resembling the orbit of the moon (*candramaṇḍalasannibhān*), through all his mouths."[54]

Similarly, we find another parallel between the two texts. The actual witnessing of the divine dance is described as follows in the KoP:[55]

> "They heard the sound generated by the five types of musical instruments accompanied by the sound of Veda *mantras* as well as the continuous sound coming from the divine anklets [of Śiva Naṭarāja]."

A close parallel to the above-mentioned description is found in the CM[56] as follows:

> "Both of them heard the sounds of the five types of musical instruments (*pañcavādya*) and the recitation of the Veda; [they also heard] the high pitched (*tāram*) sound emanating from the anklets [worn] on the lotus feet of Śiva (*śūlī*)."

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52 *āyira matiyutitta varuvarai pōla vēta*
māyiram vakaiyālōtu matutakap pāṉu kampa
rāyira mukatti raṇṭā yiraṅkarat tāla ṇaitta
vāyiraṅ caṅku mōmeṉ ṟaṟaintaṉa taḷaṅka vaṅkaṉ. KoP, 4.6.

53 *naṭamuyal virakun tāḷa katiyunal laruḷāṟ peṟṟa*
vaṭakuṭa vaṉaiya tōḷka ḷāyira muṭaiya vāṇaṉ
cuṭarviṭu kaṭakak kaiyāṟ ṟemmeṉap paṉmu katta
kuṭamuḷa veḷumu ḷakkaṅ kuraikaṭaṉ muḷakkaṅ koḷḷa. KoP, 4.7.

54 *sahasra* [*mūrdha* em. *mūrta* ms.] *prakhyāto bhānukampo gaṇeśvaraḥ*.
sahasraśaṅkho viśadaśailarāja ivāparaḥ.
śaṅkhānniveśya vaktreṣu candramaṇḍalasannibhān.
gajadaṇḍadhvanenāśu … CM, p. 80.

55 *aintutun tupiyu māci larumaṟai yoliyu nīṭu*
kantaru vattā kūṭuṅ kāṉamuṅ kēṭṭā rumpar
tantami ṟirucci lampi ṉaravamuṅ kēṭṭā rupmar
cintiya mantā rattiṉ ceḷumalar teriyaki kaṇṭār. KoP, 4.8.

56 *tāv ubhau pañcavādyānāṃ vedānāṃ ca dhvaniṃ puraḥ* |
tāraṃ ca nūpurāravaṃ pādapadmasya śūlinaḥ | CM, p. 81.

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The description of Naṭarāja's divine form with various decorations are given in the KoP[57] as follows:

> "They [the sages] saw one foot firmly placed on the ground and another slightly lifted, decorated with the anklets, [his] brilliant form, the beautiful thighs, the wrapped tiger skin around the waist, the sash, the waist band and the sacred thread on the chest."

We find similar expressions in the CM:[58]

> "[He] has firmly set one foot down; [He] is motionless and is beyond the reach of words. His left foot is slightly bent sideways and adorned with a ruby-studded anklet. His body is decorated from head to foot and thus it is shining. The two thighs are well-shaped and [wrapped] with tiger-skin; the serpent tied as waist-band is shining with its hood; the hood of the snake shines on the beautiful navel; the other arm shines with the beautiful sacred thread."

In this way there are some more and sometimes even verbatim similarities in both CM and KoP, especially in the detailed description of Naṭarāja and the goddess Pārvatī. These instances of similarities notwithstanding, we cannot firmly conclude that KoP is based on the CM. We can say at the most that, as we have seen in the case of the AP, where its author Nigamajñāna I along with introducing various types of changes in the content of the legend also incorporates some of the Śaivasiddhānta view points, Umāpati, the author of KoP, who is one of the reputed Śaiva teachers of his time, also utilizes the medium of the *sthalapurāṇa*, the KoP in this case, in the same way to propagate the inner (Śaiva yoga) meanings related to the concept of Naṭarāja, his dance, the hall where he performs the dance, etc.[59]

According to Paul Younger, who has discussed the CM and the KoP in his study of the Naṭarāja temple, the CM was composed with "the specific concerns of North Indian pilgrims" in mind (Younger 1995, 184). This view is highly debatable and no concrete evidence from the text is provided for it (in fact, there is none in the text). The *sthalapurāṇas* are composed for the general devout pilgrims irrespective of their place of origin. That apart, in Younger's study there is no one-to-one comparison between any specific verse(s) of the CM and KoP. As such, it does not add to the

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57 *tiruvaṭi nilaiyum vīcuñ ceyya kāluñ cilampu*
muruvaḷa roḷiyum vāynta vūruvu muṭutta tōlu
maraitaru purivuṅ kacci ṉaṇikaḷu maḷakā runti
maruviya vutarapantak kōppunūl vāyppu mārpum. KoP, *naṭarācaccarukkam*, 4.11.

58 *sthāpitaikapadāmbhojaṃ niścalaṃ vāgagocaram* |
tiryakkuñcitavāmāṅghriṃ lasanmāṇikkanūpuram |
āpādamastakaṃ bhūṣaṃ punaruktaprabhodayam |
ūrūruddaṇḍayugalaṃ calavyāghrājināmbaram |
phaṇāratnaprabhāhārikaṭisūtrasamujjvalam|
pratyuptanavaratnāḍhyanābhikalyāṇabhūṣaṇam|
yajñasūtraprabhāśobhiśilāsanabhujāntaram | CM, p. 82.

59 See also Younger 1995, 176–184.

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present paper, which is a comparative study fully based on the form and content of the *sthalapurāṇa* texts in Sanskrit (as part of bigger Purāṇas) and their Tamil adaptations composed by different authors in different periods.

Conclusion

We have made a brief comparison of a few *sthalapurānas* in Sanskrit and their Tamil adaptations in order to highlight the various differences as well as innovations found in the adaptations. We have also shown how the innovations are in keeping with the Tamil literary conventions as well as the strong influence of the Śaivasiddhānta religio-philosophical system. We have seen that the authors of many of the Tamil adaptations, who are great Śaiva preceptors themselves, appear to be very eager to utilize the medium of the *sthalapurāṇa* to incorporate and thereby propagate some of the basic tenets of the Śaivasiddhānta philosophy, rituals and of [Śaiva] Yoga in the minds of the devout readers. With a fair degree of certainty we can conclude that this is a unique and a defining feature of the *sthalapurāṇa* literary corpus in Tamil. A comparative study on a larger scale of the huge corpus of Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇas* and the equally vast Tamil *sthalapurāṇa* literature—both in form and content—with the aim to highlight the innovations and reformulations in the Tamil adaptations of the Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇas* will be highly rewarding. The present study is a modest beginning in that direction, on which the author intends to embark in the near future.

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Glory of the Tiruvanantapuram Padmanābhasvāmi Temple as Described in the *Māhātmyas*

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Introduction

Among the 108 beloved places of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Tradition (*divyadeśas*), thirteen temples belong to Malaināṭu or Kerala.[1] Among these, the Padmanābhasvāmi Temple, located in Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum), the capital city of Kerala, is well known among Vaiṣṇava devotees. In the year 2011, it became world-famous because of the unveiling of an invaluable collection of treasures stored in the secret chambers of the temple;[2] this discovery pointed to the glorious past of the temple. The glory of this abode of Lord Viṣṇu may be found referred to in several literary works and this temple might have already started being known in the ninth century CE, from the period of Nammāḻvār, one of the twelve Vaiṣṇavite saints of the Āḻvār tradition, who composed a hymn (*Tiruvāymoḻi* 10.2) in praise of Lord Padmanābha of Tiruvanantapuram. Apart from this, several works other than the Purāṇas[3] speak about the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple: a *māhātyma* named *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, probably composed before the fourteenth century,[4] an early Malayalam work known under the title *Anantapuravarṇana*, and other texts such as the

1 The 108 Vaiṣṇava temples are traditionally divided into various geographical regions (*nāṭu*): Malaināṭu or Cēranāṭu (Kerala) thirteen; Pāṇṭiyanāṭu (south of the Kaveri river) eighteen; Cōḻanāṭu (Kaveri delta) fourty; Naṭunāṭu (the intermediary region in between Cōḻanāṭu and Toṇṭaināṭu) two; Toṇṭaināṭu (northern Tamilnadu) twenty-two; Vaṭanāṭu (North India) eleven; others (Heaven) two.

2 For a detailed discussion on the opening of these secret chambers see Gopalakrishnan (2012, 7–12), Narayanan (2011, 5–8) and Sasibhooshan & Raja (2011, 30–31, 211–213). The secret chambers were opened at the order of the Supreme Court of India in 2011 based on a case filed by T. P. Sundararaj, a retired Indian Police Service Officer. This Supreme Court order instructed the Government of Kerala to take over the administration of the temple and to account for and prepare an inventory of the wealth kept in the secret chambers of the temple. For a detailed report on this case, see Subramanium 2012 and 2014.

3 For the details of Purāṇas that refer to Tiruvanantapuram, see Bayi 1995, 350–356.

4 The dating of this *māhātmya* is uncertain, since there is no internal evidence to confirm the date. The *Anantapuravarṇana* (1953, 15) is dated to the fourteenth century and the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* might be a source for the Malayalam text since we find several common ideas in the Sanskrit text and in the Malayalam text. If the Sanskrit text was the source for the Malayalam text, it could be dated to earlier than the fourteenth century CE.

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Syānandūrapurāṇasamuccaya,[5] the *Padmanābhodaya* by Śaṅku, the *Padmanābhacarita* by Kṛṣṇaśarman (see Raja 1958, 169–170) and the *Padmanābhakīrtana* (see Raja 1958, 173) give light on the temple as well as on its glorification. Several works of Svāti-Tirunāḷ, a ruler of Travancore, especially his *Syānandūrapuravarṇanaprabandha*, which describes the different activities of the temple, including its festivals, need a special mention. There are also many minor works on the temple, such as the *Padmanābhapañcaka* (see Raja 1958, 257), the *Padmanābhastuti* (see Raja 1958, 242), the *Padmanābhavijaya* of Subramaṇya (see Raja 1958, 172), etc. We also find the *māhātmya* of the temple mentioned in many literary works, especially in *sandeśakāvyas*, such as the *Śukasandeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa and the *Haṃsasandeśa*, and in Sanskrit dramas, such as the *Vasumatīkalyāṇa* and the *Pradyumnābhyudaya*, etc. We also find references to it in the hagiological works of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, namely, the *Guruparamparāprabhāva*, the *Divyasūrīcarita*, the *Prapannāmṛta*, etc. A *sthalapurāṇa* in Tamil, the *Tiruvaṇantai Talavilācam* (see Bayi 1995, 364) on the Tiruvanantapuram temple by Caṅkara Cuppiramaṇiya Kavirāyar also merits special attention. Though there exist several works on the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* seems to be an important work that has so far not received much scholarly attention.[6] Therefore this contribution will focus on this less-known *māhātmya*.

Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya

Among the above works that spread the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, a fully-fledged work similar to other known *māhātmyas*, is taken up here for a detailed discussion. For this, a manuscript belonging to the Trivandrum Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library, bearing the number T. No. 1845, has been consulted.[7] There are eleven chapters in this *māhātmya* written in *anuṣṭubh* metre, and the text professes to be a part of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.[8] The text is in the form of a dialogue between Sūta and the sages and, similarly to other *māhātmyas*, begins with a prologue. The sages perform a thousand sacrifices (*sahasra-satra*) and when the morning offerings are over, Śaunaka and other sages gathered there request Sūta to narrate the myth and to explain the origin and importance of Viṣṇu in Anantaśayana[kṣetra] (the Tiruvanantapuram temple).

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5 For a detailed description of this text, see Bayi 1995, 366–372.

6 Bayi in her detailed study on the Tiruvanantapuram temple devotes a chapter on "Search of Sources" (1995, 349–401) and discusses the different works related to the temple but does not include the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* in it.

7 The *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, vol. I, 183 mentions a number of other manuscripts as well as a printed edition (in Grantha script, Madras 1906) of this *māhātmya*. However, I have not been able to trace this printed edition.

8 E.g. *iti śrī brahmāṇḍapurāṇe brahmāṇḍagolavistārākhyāne anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmye ekādaśoddhyāyaḥ*.

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In reply to the sages' question, Sūta narrates the myth of origin of the temple, explaining from where the god Viṣṇu appeared in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, his glory, the *tīrthas* (sacred waterbodies) around Tiruvanantapuram, the benefits one attains by having the vision of the deity in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, and also the fruits obtained by reading and listening to the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*.

In the first chapter of the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* (see Appendix I), after venerating Viṣṇu, Sūta explains the importance of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and begins to tell the sages the story of its origin and the story of a great devotee named Divākaramuni, who lived, along with other sages, in Dvāraka and worshipped Viṣṇu there. The second chapter of the *māhātmya* describes sage Agastya's arrival on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī[9] river to help the *devas* to restore the balance of the earth, which had become unbalanced by the great size of the crowd attending the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī in the Himalāya mountains. Agastya, who feels that he might not be able to have the vision of Viṣṇu if he moved to the south, is told by Viṣṇu to perform penance on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī river; Viṣṇu assures him that he would appear before him while he is there. The third chapter of the *māhātmya* gives additional information about the origin of the temple, while the fourth chapter praises the glory of Padmanābha, the lord of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, incorporating words from different Vedic hymns such as the *Puruṣasūkta*, the *Uttaranārāyaṇa*, etc. In the fifth chapter, the penance of Agastya on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī river and Agastya's vision of Viṣṇu as Padmanābha are described; the sage praises the glory of Padmanābha and this is written in the form of a *stuti*. The sixth chapter of the *māhātyma* is also in the form of a *stuti* to Padmanābha by the mountains Malaya, Mahendra, etc., and also by the river Tāmraparṇī. In the seventh chapter, Padmanābha blesses the sage Agastya and asks him to remain on the Malayācala, one of the seven main chains of mountains mentioned in the scriptures in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats, and tells the Malayācala mountain range that Agastya will henceforth stay there on the mountain. In this chapter, the river Tāmraparṇī is praised, too, and the story of Agastya's stay in the surroundings of the river is told. In the eighth chapter, we see Divākaramuni requesting Viṣṇu to transform his Anantapadmanābha incarnation into a form in which he can be conveniently worshipped. Viṣṇu agrees to this request and the sage constructs a temple for Padmanābha, where he may venerate him daily. The ninth chapter of the *māhātmya* is devoted to describing the glory of Narasiṃha, who has a secondary shrine close to the main sanctum of Lord Padmanābha. The tenth chapter tells the story of the demon Keśi and his fight with Viṣṇu, while the eleventh describes seventy-two *tīrthas*[10]

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9 Tāmraparṇī is a perennial river that originates from the Agastyakudam peak of the Pothigai hills in the Western Ghats, above Papanasam in the Ambasamudram taluk. It flows through the Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts of the Tamil Nadu state of southern India into the Gulf of Mannar. There is also a *māhātyma* on this river named *Tāmraparṇīmāhātmya*.

10 Though the text gives the number of *tīrthas* as seventy-two, I could trace only forty-one *tīrthas* from the text.

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(*dvisaptatīha tīrthāni puṇyadāni śarīriṇām*) around the Padmanābhasvāmi Temple and concludes with a *stuti* on Padmanābha.

The Origin of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple as Explained in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

Though there are different myths[11] on the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the story narrated in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* is quite descriptive and closely reflects some of the present-day practices of the temple, especially the appointment of the priests from the Tuḷu-speaking area of the North Kerala, as the *māhātmya*, too, suggests.

In the introductory verses of the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, the sages ask Sūta to tell them about the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and Sūta explains it in detail. The *māhātmya* describes how several sages worshipped Kṛṣṇa in Dvāraka, Kṛṣṇa's abode. Among them is a sage named Divākara, a pious and strict devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Pleased by his devotion, Viṣṇu appears before him as a radiant young child. Attracted by the charm of the boy, the sage asks him about his home and parents. The boy replies that he has no father, no mother and no home and asks the sage to take care of him; the sage agrees. But the child has a condition: if ever he feels disrespected, he will not continue to stay with the sage. One day, in an extremely naughty mood, the little boy puts the sacred *śālagrāma* (the small idol used for daily worship) worshipped by sage Divākara into his mouth. Seeing this, the sage pushes away the little one with his left hand and the boy runs away from the sage. Leaving the rituals, the sage runs behind him lamenting, saying that he would not be able to live without the boy. While running, the sage also repeatedly asks the boy to stop and says that he would be free to play with and take away the *śālagrāmas* that were worshipped by him, but the boy does not stop. The sage follows him and, after running a long way, they reach a place near the southern sea. The boy, in full view of the sage, enters into a huge hollow tree. The sage reaches around near the tree, searching for the boy, but the huge tree falls and spreads over three *yojanas*. The frightened sage searches for the boy in the hollow and, not seeing him there, runs to the seashore, which the spread of the tree has reached. The sage weeps, saying that it would not be possible for him to live without the boy; he asks himself whether the boy was Kṛṣṇa or Lord Padmanābha. The sage repeatedly pleads with the boy to appear from the hollow where he had disappeared. He meditates there, visualising Viṣṇu in the form of Anantapadmanābha. Suddenly the huge tree is transformed into the form of Padmanābha lying on a serpent along with his attributes. His head is positioned near a *tīrtha* called Matsyatīrtha (Tiruvallam area, seven kilometres south of the Tiruvanantapuram temple), and his shoulders are close to the Cakratīrtha and

11 For different version of stories on the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 18–22.

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Śaṅkhatīrtha.[12] The middle part of his body is on the southern side of the Varāhatīrtha and west of the Padmatīrtha (the present location of the Tiruvanantapuram temple). Both feet are near the Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha[13] (present Tṛppādapuram, twelve kilometres to the north of the Tiruvanantapuram temple). At this point, the *māhātmya* describes the glory of this form of Padmanābha at great length and also the sage Divākara venerating and meditating on the Lord. The *māhātmya* moreover includes a long *stuti* on Padmanābha by sage Divākara and sage Agastya, and by the mountains of that region and the Tāmraparṇī river, all eagerly waiting to have the vision of Padmanābha. Pleased with the prayers of Agastya, the mountains and the Tāmraparṇī river, Lord Padmanābha blesses them all and gives them boons.

Gratified with the devotion of the sage Divākara, Lord Padmanābha addresses him as a native of *tuḷudeśa*[14] (*tauḷavosau yatīndraḥ*) and encourages him to ask for a boon. The sage Divākara praises the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu, who briefly explains how, from the form of a small boy (Vāmana), he took an immense form and measured the whole universe in three steps. The sage then asks the Lord to transform his huge form into a more suitable one, which he and other devotees could see and worship. He prays that the Lord be pleased to limit his form to three times the length of his bamboo-stick (a *daṇḍa* that the sages carry with them) to accommodate his limited, mortal vision. Padmanābha agrees to transform his body and shrinks to the required dimensions. Thus a shrine with a beautiful tower (*vimāna*) having three doors comes into being. While the first door has the head position of the Lord, the second door has the middle portion (*nābhi*) of his body and the third one his feet. Here the *māhātmya* provides us with a beautiful description of the form in which the Lord manifested himself at the request of the sage. In the description, the *māhātmya* also mentions Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī, the consorts of Lord Padmanābha.

The Lord tells the sage that he will stay in Tiruvanantapuram with Narasiṃha[15] and that he will be pleased if the sage worships him twelve times daily according to the methods taught in the *Pauṣkara*[*saṃhitā*]. The sage is also asked to perform

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12 At present there are two small tanks namely Cakratīrtha and Śaṅkhatīrtha near the Trivandrum Shangumugham beach, Kerala. The holy bath during the festival of the Tiruvanantapuram temple takes place close to these two *tīrthas*.

13 It is believed that the head of the Lord touched present day Tiruvallam (seven kilometres from the Tiruanantapuram temple on its southern side) and the feet extended up to Tṛppādapuram (twelve kilometres from the present temple on its northern side).

14 Tuḷudeśa refers to the area of the former South Canara district of the Madras Presidency of British India, which covered the areas of the present-day districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and the Kasaragod District of Kerala. The district was one of the most heterogeneous of Madras Presidency with Tuḷu, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Urdu and Beary being the principal languages spoken. It is possible that the Tuḷudeśa mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* more specifically refers to the present Kasaragod district of Kerala since the priests of Tiruvanantapuram temple are appointed from the Kasaragod area.

15 At present there is a sanctum of Narasiṃha close to the main shrine. For a discussion of the myth related to the Narasiṃha installed in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 206–207.

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different rituals for prosperity (*śānti*) prescribed in the *Vaikhānasa* texts as well as fortnightly, monthly and yearly festivals. It is further decreed that the descendants of the sage, who are from the Tuḷu region, should continue to perform rituals for him since he is pleased only by the rituals performed by them.[16]

We can very easily connect some of the above statements made in the *māhātmya* with the present-day practices of the temple: the involvement of a *sannyāsin* (sage) in the ritual affairs of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and the fact that the priests of the temple are appointed from the Tuḷu region. According to the temple practices, a ritual will be performed every morning by a sage, who is designated as *puṣpāñjali-svāmiyār*.[17] At present, the pontiffs of two *maṭhas* (monasteries), namely Naṭuvil Maṭham of Thrissur (Kerala) and Muñcira Maṭham of present Kanyakumari District (Tamil Nadu), are chosen for this position on a six-months rotation. Four chief priests (who are known as *nambi*), as well as twenty-four assistant priests, are appointed from two villages, namely Kokkada and Pulloor, situated on either side of the Candragiri river in Kasaragod District of Kerala. While the Kokkada village brahmins are mostly Malayala brahmins (Nampūtiris), the Pulloor village brahmins are Tuḷu brahmins. Thus the daily rituals by a sage, mostly not followed in other temples of Kerala, and the appointment of priests from the Tuḷu-speaking region confirm with the statements and descriptions found in the *Anantaśayanakṣetra-māhātmya*.

Other Myths of the Origin of the Temple[18]

There is an another version of the origin of the temple, more widely known than the one discussed above, which relates to a Nampūtiri brahmin sage by name

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16 Bayi (1995, 19) observes that "we see a strong Tulu Brahmin tradition existing in the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple" and adds further that "Divākara is given a period dating to the month of Idavom, 225 ME corresponding to May/June of 1050 A.D." However, Bayi does not give any reference for this dating.

17 For a detailed description of the roles of the *puṣpāñjalisvāmiyār* concerning the temple rituals, see Bayi 1995, 279–282.

18 Bayi (1995, 20) narrates this story, different from the two myths described above, on the origin of the temple: "It is said that when a Pulaya woman was working in a field she heard the wail of an infant. To her surprise, she found a beautiful baby boy who seemed to be abandoned, close at hand. The aura surrounding the baby was so apparent that she feared to touch him. However moved by his continuous crying, she washed herself and cradling the baby in her arms fed him with her breast milk. The baby then fell silent. She placed him gently under the shelter of an Iluppa [*Madhuca longifolia*] tree. In a flash a five hooded cobra appeared and removed the infant to a hole in the tree, sheltering him with its hood like an umbrella. The pulayi and her husband, overcome by this divine occurrence, would daily go to the spot and offer husked rice as well as milk in a coconut shell. The King of this [Travancore] land on hearing of this wondrous happening, went there and immediately had a small temple built at that place, which later grew to its subsequent impressive proportions."

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Vilvamaṅgala.[19] This sage, who lived in North Malabar (Raja 1958, 41; Bayi 1995, 20), used to have visions of a god in the form of a boy during his daily rituals. One day, during the sage's daily worship, the boy took away the *śālagrāma*. The sage became angry and the boy vanished. The sage went looking for the boy and finally located him in a place known as *Anantankāṭu*[20] or "forest of Ananta" in the south of Kerala, which is today the city of Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum). The sage had a vision of Viṣṇu reclining on the serpent Ananta and, not having anything suitable to offer, he plucked a few unripe mangoes and placed them in a coconut shell lying there. We find a reflection of this story when today salted mango is offered in a coconut shell made of gold during the morning rituals of this temple. As was discussed earlier, the custom followed for the past several centuries of a Nampūtiri brahmin *sannyāsin* (designated as *puṣpāñjalisvāmiyār*) being present in the temple for the performance of the morning offerings further reflects this story.

Link between Two Padmanābhasvāmi Temples in Kerala

The *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, while describing the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, mentions that the sage Divākaramuni worshipped Viṣṇu in Dvāraka and later reached Tiruvanantapuram, where he had the vision of Lord Padmanābha and installed the present temple. But the same *māhātmya* also refers to Divākaramuni as a *Tauḷava*, one who belongs to the Tuḷu region (South Karnataka/North Kerala). In another legend, which we saw earlier, the sage Vilvamaṅgala worshipped Viṣṇu in the present Kasaragod area in North Kerala. In Kasaragod district (Kerala), there is a Viṣṇu temple, located in Anantapura, and this temple is named "Anantapadmanābhasvāmi Temple."[21] While in the Kasaragod Anantapura temple Padmanābha is depicted as seated on the serpent, in the Tiruvanantapuram temple the Lord is also shown on the serpent, but in reclining position. The beautiful Anantapura temple in Kasaragod is surrounded by a rectangular lake and the temple sanctum is reached by a small bridge over the lake. It is also believed that it is in this place that the sage had

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19 Referring to K. Rama Pisharoti, K. Kunjunni Raja (1958, 41) observes that "there were three Vilvamaṅgalas: the first was the author of the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and flourished in the ninth century A.D.; the second Vilvamaṅgala is identified with the grammarian who wrote the *Puruṣakāra* commentary on *Daiva*; and the third was a contemporary of Mānadeva, Zamorin of Calicut, who flourished in the seventeenth century." Though the stories related to Tiruvanantapuram mention a *sannyāsin* named Vilvamaṅgala, we do not have written documents to relate this Vilvamaṅgala with the above mentioned three Vilamaṅgalas.

20 It is also said (Bayi 1995, 19) that, though not found in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, when the little boy disappeared from the vision of sage Divākara, he proclaimed that if ever the Muni desired to see him, he would have to go to Anantankāṭu (forest of Ananta) and seek him out there. Thus the sage went on searching for the Anantankāṭu and finally got the vision of God in the Anantankāṭu, the area where we find the Tiruvanantapuram temple at present.

21 For a brief history and features of this temple, see http://ananthapuratemple.com/history (last accessed on November 18, 2020).

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the vision of Padmanābha as a young boy, whom the sage later found in Tiruvanantapuram. It is also considered that the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple in Kasaragod is the *mūlasthāna* (original place) of the Tiruvanantapuram temple. As Bayi (1995, 21) says, "the Anantapuram temple in Kasargode is related to both Divakara Muni and Vilvamangalattu swamiyar. Kasargode, which is today a part of Kerala was once in Tulu country. As such a trend of thought strongly prevails that these two sages were in reality one individual." The *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* clearly refers to the sage Divākara as a *Tauḷava* and we also see that priests of the Tiruvanantapuram temple are currently appointed from the Tuḷu speaking area of Kerala. Additionally, a daily ritual is performed by a sage who belongs to a *maṭha* of North Kerala. All this, in one way or another, links the Tiruvanantapuram temple with the Tuḷu speaking North Kerala region. Due to the lack of historical evidence, we cannot be sure of the historical development of the connection between the Kasaragod temple and the Tiruvanantapuram temple; however, there seems to be a strong belief among devotees in the connection between these two temples.

Other than the Anantapuram temple of North Kerala, two more temples may well be connected to the Tiruvanantapuram temple, namely the present Tiruvallam Paraśurāma temple (five kilometres from the Tiruvanantapuram temple) and the Tṛppādapuram Kṛṣṇa temple (twelve kilometres from the Tiruvanantapuram temple). As was discussed earlier, when Viṣṇu gave the vision of Anantapadmanābha to the sage Divākara, the Lord had his head in Tiruvallam and his feet in Tṛppādapuram. In both these places, there are temples: while in Tiruvallam it is a Paraśurāma temple with a separate sanctum for Viṣṇu, in Tṛppādapuram there are separate sanctums for Śiva and Viṣṇu. There is also a temple tank in Tiruvallam presently known as Balitīrtha (while the *māhātmya* refers to it as Matsyatīrtha), and two water tanks in Tṛppādapuram, as mentioned in the *māhātmya*, namely Aśrutīrtha and Pāpanāśinītīrtha (in the *māhātmya* these tanks are referred to as Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha).

Tīrthas Mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

A *māhātmya* usually describes the *tīrthas* (sacred waterbodies) in the surroundings of the centres that figure in that *māhātmya*. In the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, too, we find a list of *tīrthas* around the Tiruvanantapuram temple. Regarding the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Anantapadmanābha in Tiruvanantapuram, the *māhātmya* mentions certain *tīrthas* to specify his lying position that are said to correspond to particular parts of the lying of the god's body. This includes the head with Matsyatīrtha, Śaṅkhatīrtha and Cakratīrtha with his arms, the stomach between Varāhatīrtha and Padmatīrtha and the two feet with Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha.[22]

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22 The *tīrthas* mentioned here could be located at present with different names: Balitīrtha at Tiruvallam (head); Varāhatīrtha and Padmatīrtha (middle part); two *tīrthas* namely Kaṇṇuṇīr[aśru]tīrtha and Pāpanāśinītīrtha at Tṛppādapuram (feet).

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The eleventh chapter of the *māhātmya* lists and describes the glory of several *tīrthas*. Though the *māhātmya* says that there are seventy-two *tīrthas*,[23] it seems to list only forty-one:

1. Matsyatīrtha, 2. Varāhatīrtha, 3. Pādatīrtha [Tīrthapāda as known now], 4. Padmanābhatīrtha [Padmatīrtha as known now], 5. Śaṅkhatīrtha, 6. Caktratīrtha, 7. Dharmatīrtha, 8. Adharmatīrtha, 9. Indratīrtha, 10. Agnitīrtha, 11. Yamatīrtha, 12. Nairṛtatīrtha, 13. Varuṇatīrtha, 14. Vāyutīrtha, 15. Somatīrtha, 16. Īśanatīrtha, 17. Durgātīrtha, 18. Bhavatītīrtha, 19. Agastyatīrtha, 20. Gadātīrtha, 21. Veṇutīrtha, 22. Kāśyapatīrtha, 23. Bhāradvājatīrtha, 24. Ātreyatīrtha, 25. Viśvāmitratīrtha, 26. Gautamatīrtha, 27. Jāmadagnitīrtha, 28. Vāsiṣṭhatīrtha, 29. Mārīcatīrtha, 30. Āṅgirasatīrtha, 31. Paulastyatīrtha, 32. Pulahatīrtha, 33. Kratutīrtha, 34. Bhṛgutīrtha, 35. Kūrmatīrtha, 36. Nārasiṃhatīrtha, 37–41. Pañcapāṇḍavatīrthas.

Other Important Literary Works that Describe the Glory of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple

Among the other literary works that speak of the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantapuravarṇana*, a short poem of the fourteenth century CE (see *Anantapuravarṇana* 1953, 15), one of the early Maṇipravāla (Sanskrit mixed with Malayalam) texts from Kerala and consisting of less than two hundred verses in the *anuṣṭubh* metre, deserves special attention. This text describes the glory not only of the Tiruvanantapuram temple but also of the Tiruvanantapuram city of that period. The *Līlātilaka*,[24] a fourteenth-century Sanskrit treatise on Malayalam grammar and poetics, quotes the following verse from the *Anantapuravarṇana*, in which the *Anantapuravarṇana* mentions that a garland is made for the ritual of Viṣṇu (Puṇḍarīkākṣa) with flowers that are Tamil and Sanskrit, as an example of Maṇipravāla:

tamiḻsaṃskṛtameṉṟuḷḷa
sumanassukaḷ koṇṭoru
iṇḍamāla toṭukkiṉṟeṉ
puṇḍarīkākṣapūjayāy (verse 8)[25]

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23 *dvisaptatīha tīrthāni puṇyadāni śarīriṇām*, p. 73 of Ms. T. 1845.

24 As Wilden (2014, 347) observes, the *Līlātilaka* is a "foundational text of the Kerala grammatical tradition. This anonymous text is generally dated to the late fourteenth century. It is a treatise on grammar in the extended sense, that is, including poetics, and is written in Sanskrit *sūtras* with a Sanskrit commentary. It provides numerous examples that allow a glimpse of the variety of Kerala local dialect called Maṇipravāḷam. The first chapter (*śilpa*) discusses the properties of the Maṇipravāḷam language (*bhāṣā*)."

25 In this verse, the word "Tamil" (*tamiḻ*) refers to the Malayalam language. This shows that the word "Tamil" was used in the early Malayalam region to denote Malayalam (cf. *Anantapuravarṇana* 1953, 8). Though in this verse the word *iṇḍā* (garland) is used as a Malayalam word,

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Though most of the text is written as a glory of Padmanābha, we also find interesting facts related to the day-to-day activities that take place in the city of Tiruvanantapuram.[26] Apart from describing the main shrine of Padmanābha and his glory (verses 147–161), the text also looks at some of the secondary shrines inside the Tiruvanantapuram temple complex, including Ayyappasvāmi, Kṛṣṇa, etc. Even minute descriptions of the temple seem to have been included in the poem. As an example, we see a description of a cradle (verse 142) in the temple, where young Kṛṣṇa sleeps. Even today we may see this cradle placed on the southern side of the main shrine. The Varāha temple and the Śrīkaṇṭheśvara temple, two temples that are located not far from the Tiruvanantapuram temple, are also mentioned in this text. This poem also mentions certain *tīrthas* in Tiruvanantapuram, including Indratīrtha, Bhṛgutīrtha, Agnitīrtha, Varāhatīrtha and Dakṣiṇagaṅgā, Kaṇvatīrtha, Somatīrtha, Rāmatīrtha, Anantatīrtha and Īśānatīrtha (verses 15–19). It is noteworthy that this text mentions Kāntalūrśālā[27] (verse 107), a place near Tiruvanantapuram where an ancient Vedic school[28] was in operation. The poem concludes with the description of Viṣṇu's ten incarnations.

The unpublished *Padmanābhodaya*[29] is a short *kāvya* of Śaṅkukavi (eighteenth century CE), written at the instance of Ramavarma Yuvaraja, a nephew of King Martanda Varma of Travancore, on the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The work consists of one hundred and forty-two verses in four sections called *paddhatis*. It deals with the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and gives a description of the magnificence of Lord Padmanābha and the blessings showered by the Lord on sage Divākara. In this text, too, as we see in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, we find in its first *paddhati*, the sage Divākara worshipping Viṣṇu in Dvāraka (Kuśasthalī I.17) and the Lord appearing before him as a boy; the description of the boy is written

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we see the usage of *iṇḍā* in Sanskrit Śaiva texts too:
vastreṇḍāṃ tu samuddhṛtya raktavastreṇa veṣṭayet
iṇḍādibhis sugandhaiś ca bhūṣaṇair gugguluṃ dahet (*Sahasratantra*, IFP T. 33, 56:44; see also Goodall 2021).

26 For example the poem contains a description of a market (present-day Chalai Market in Trivandrum city).

27 *kāntiyuñcelvamuṃ mikka*
kāntaḷūrccāla kāṇalām |
mūṉṟu koyilumenmunnil
toṉṟuṃ tatra maṭhaṅṅaḷum || (*Anantapuravarṇana* 107).

28 A copper plate of 866 CE (*Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 1–14) mentions this ancient Vedic school named Kāndalūrśālai, a Vedic institution that all the kings from the time of Rājendra Coḷa I (985–1014 CE) claim to have regulated. Though we do not have much information on this *śālā*, it seems this Kāndalūrśālai was located in the present Valiyacālai, not far from the Tiruvanatapuram temple.

29 Manuscript T. 1125 of the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library is used for the study of this text. There is one more manuscript of this text in Baroda (Ms 6822A). A commentary by Kṛṣṇa of this text is known to exist at Mysore Oriental Manuscript Library.

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in rather captivating verses (I.22–45). The second *paddhati* begins by describing how much the sage enjoyed the presence of the boy and the fondness of the sage for him (II.1–7). The story moves on as in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, but here the verses that describe the naughtiness of the boy are very ornate (see Appendix I). When he is pushed by the sage with his left hand while moving away from the sage, the boy tells the sage that he would see him again in the forest named Ananta (*kānane anantasaṃjñe*), but we do not find any reference to the Ananta forest in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*. At the beginning of the third *paddhati* we see that the sage, who has understood that the boy is none other than Viṣṇu, blames himself for his own foolishness in letting the boy get away from him. His lamenting is described vividly in this chapter. At the beginning of the fourth chapter, we see a description of the Ananta forest when sage Divākara reaches Tiruvanantapuram searching for the boy. The boy appears and the sage follows him; finally, they reach an immense tree. The boy enters the hollow, the tree falls and Lord Padmanābha appears before the sage. The veneration of the Lord by the sage is described in several verses (4.19–31) in this chapter. In this text we do not find the sage asking Lord Padmanābha to reduce his body. Instead, the Lord himself announces that he will remain there for the welfare of the *vañcīndrakula* (Cera dynasty) and asks the sage to remain there, too, to worship him daily. The text concludes with the veneration to Lord Padmanābha and also praises the Cera dynasty.

Svāti-Tirunāḷ and His Works on Lord Padmanābha

Among the rulers of Travancore, Svāti-Tirunāḷ (1813–1846) and his works deserve a special mention. He was a great composer of music and author of literary as well as devotional works. This includes 311 songs (in Sanskrit, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi), including the *Bhaktimañjarī* in thousand verses describing the different incarnations of Viṣṇu, the *Padmanābhaśataka* praising Lord Padmanābha, the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* in ten chapters describing the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and details about the temple festivals, the *Utsavaprabhandha* (see Sharma 1985, 113–114, 1057–1078) describing the procession of Lord Padmanābha during the bi-annual festivals, etc.

Among these works, the *Syānandūrapuravarṇanaprabandha*,[30] written in the *prabandha* (prose and verse) style, deserves special mention since the work is composed similarly to a *māhātmya* on the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The work is divided into ten *stabakas* (chapters). The first chapter, *Bālakrīḍa*, begins by extolling the glory of Lord Padmanābha and then moves on to the story of Divākaramuni as told in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*. But instead of Dvāraka (the capital city of Ānarta), this text mentions Ānarta itself as the place where sage Divākara stayed. While the appearance of the boy and his intentionally mischievous activities are

30 See Appendix I for selected verses from this text.

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explained in the first chapter, the second chapter, *Pratyakṣadarśana*, gives an account of the sage moving towards the Ananta forest searching for the boy, and the third chapter, *Keśādipādastuti*, depicts the sage's veneration of Padmanābha. The fourth chapter, *Kṣetravarṇana*, is named *Kṣetramāhātmya* and the glory of Lord Padmanābha is enumerated in detail. While we do not find many details of the subsidiary deities in the other *māhātmyas* that we have discussed, this text of Svāti-Tirunāḷ praises them, too, and this description matches well with the subsidiary deities that one may see today in the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The same chapter also highlights the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram or Syānandūrapura (*syānandūrapurāt paraṃ padam aho jānāmi naivāparam*) in several verses (4.1–17). The *tīrthas* are described in the fifth chapter, namely *Tīrthamāhātmya*. Eight *tīrthas* are mentioned as important and the merits one may attain by having a bath in these *tīrthas* are described in detail (5.1–8). These eight *tīrthas* are Padmatīrtha, Varāhatīrtha, Matsyatīrtha, Śaṅkhatīrtha, Cakratīrtha, Dharmatīrtha, Adharmatīrtha and Pādatīrtha. These *tīrthas* are the same that we discussed while describing the lying position of the god and these *tīrthas* corresponds to particular part of the lying of Padmanābha. This chapter also gives a detailed sketch of the temple and its components, such as the *balipīṭha* (pedestal for food offerings) (5.8), various *maṇḍapas* (pillared halls) (5.9–10), *vimānas* (towers on top of the sanctum) (5.10), the single stone *maṇḍapa* (5.11), the *dhvajastambha* (flag-post) (5.12–14), the *gopura* (towers at the entrances) (5.14–15), the *kulaśekharamaṇḍapa* (5.15), etc. The fifth chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the annual festival of the temple (5.16–21). In the sixth chapter, *Utsavapraśaṃsā*, there is a detailed account of the annual festival with all its aspects, which even includes the daily procession and the specifics of the *vāhanas* (vehicles) that are used to carry the deity: *siṃhavāhana* (first day), *anantavāhana* (second day), *kamalavāhana* (third day), *āndolikā* (fourth and seventh day), *indravāhana* (sixth day) and *garuḍavāhana* (eight, ninth and tenth day). The seventh chapter, *Mṛgayāvarṇana*,[31] gives the sequence of the royal hunt held on the ninth day of the annual festival. Its description is very close to the way it is celebrated today:

> "[...] A mock forest is fabricated in the middle of the public road nearly a kilometre from the temple. A tender-coconut is placed in this mock forest. The deities[32] move out for the hunt when the conch is sounded at around 08.30 p.m. after the routine night procession inside the temple complex is concluded. The deities go out from the west gate and return through the north gate. On the way, they halt for the hunting ceremony.
>
> The king, who is ceremoniously attired, carries the sword in his hand, while all the other members of his family are armed. [...].

31 For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Sarma 2014, 289–314.

32 Padmanābha, Narasiṃha and Kṛṣṇa are the three deities who participate in this hunting procession.

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The temple elephant goes first, the occasional clanking of its chains being the only sound since, until the hunting begins, total silence is maintained. Then follow the temple staff carrying the temple flags of varying shapes. While all the others who accompany the procession walk on either side of the processional path, the king walks in the middle. Temple musicians follow soundlessly. The three vehicles carrying Lord Padmanābha in the centre and Lord Narasiṃha and Lord Kṛṣṇa on the right and left, respectively follow the king. The procession reaches the hunting area and, after performing a short ritual in the mock forest, the Tantri, or chief priest, gives a bow and arrow to the king. The king who is the executant of the Lord, prays to Him and shoots an arrow into the coconut. Until this point the procession moves in total silence since it is supposed to be on a hunt. The moment the arrow pierces the coconut, the conch is sounded and the sound of musical instruments erupts into the atmosphere in an explosion of joy. The procession then wends its way back to the Temple from the north gate" (Sarma 2016, 251–252).

Chapter eight and nine of the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* are devoted to a detailed account of the procession held on the tenth day, which progresses towards the seashore for a holy dip, and the rituals related to the holy dip as we see today are explained: Similar to the Paḷḷiveṭṭa, in the evening, after the routine inner rounds, the procession moves out through the west gate. The male members of the royal family are arrayed with swords and shields, to accompany the procession. An elephant carrying the drum heads the procession and as in the Paḷḷiveṭṭa (hunting procession) others join in. As the vehicles carrying the Lords move out through the western fort walls, they are greeted with a twenty-one gun salute. Once the procession reaches the beach, known as *śaṅkumukham*, which is about five kilometres from the temple, the vehicles are brought to rest in the granite *maṇḍapam* near the beach. Then the idols are taken off the vehicles and carried towards the beach and specific rituals pertaining to the holy bath are performed. After the rituals the priests go under the waves for the holy dip, keeping the idol close to the chest. The king, too, participates in the rituals and the holy bath. After the ceremonial bath, the idols are placed on a specially made raised sandbank and turmeric powder is scattered on them. The king escorts the deities back to the *maṇḍapam* and moves to the nearby palace. The procession along with the king returns and enters the temple through its west gate.

The subject matter of the tenth chapter of the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* is an account of the Lakṣadīpam festival of the temple that is celebrated once in six years. It was introduced in 1750 CE[33] and is still celebrated today. One lakh lamps are lit on the festival day, which is also the culmination of the *murajapam* or recitation of three Vedas for fifty-six days in seven sessions. Not only in the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana*, but in all the other works of Svāti-Tirunāḷ, a great devotee of Pamanābha, we see prominence given to the glory of the temple.

33 For a detailed discussion on this festival see Bayi 1995, 112.

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Visit of Yāmunācārya to Tiruvanantapuram

Yāmunācārya (Āḷavantār) occupies a unique place among the Śrīvaiṣṇava teachers. In the hagiological works of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition such as the *Divyasūricarita* (16.92), *Guruparamparāprabhāva* (1975, 119–122), *Prapannāmṛta* (114.19–25), etc. we find a mention of the visit of Yāmunācārya to Tiruvanantapuram and also of the glory of Tiruvanantapuram.

In Srirangam, there is a festival known as *Adhyayanotsava* or "Festival of Recitations," during which the *Nālāyiradivyaprabandham* is recited and explained with oral and performative commentaries over twenty-one days. Once, during this festival, Yāmuna was listening to Tiruvaraṅka Perumāḷ Ariyar sing and dance *pācurams* (hymns) from the *Tiruvāymoli* (10.2.1) on Tiruvanantapuram. One of the verses urges everyone to go to Tiruvanantapuram. The Araiyar apparently sang the last line of this verse over and over again, looking at Yāmuna's face. Moved, Yāmuna arose immediately and undertook the pilgrimage, forgetting everything else. The *Guruparamparāprabhāva* (1975, 119–122) narrates the episode of Yāmunācārya's visit to Tiruvanantapuram and his *darśan* of the Lord in detail. It is noteworthy that in this narration the Karamana river, which is less than two kilometres away from the Tiruvanantapuram temple, is mentioned as the place where Yāmunācārya met Daivavāriyāṇḍān, to whom Yāmunācārya gave the responsibility of taking care of his *maṭha* during his absence.

A Brief Sketch of the History of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple

Though we find no reference to the association of royal dynasties with the Tiruvanantapuram temple in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, we see that the *Padmanābhodaya* mentions the Travancore royal family as great devotees of Lord Pamanābha of Tiruvanantapuram. Historical evidence clearly shows that the temple was patronised by different kingdoms.[34] It was the Āy dynasty[35] who were the first to patronise the Tiruvanantapuram temple. They were followed by the second Cera dynasty. It is said (cf. Bayi 1995, 56) that Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma (who introduced the *kollam* era) arranged a meeting in this temple on the fifth day of the first year of the *kollam* era (825 CE) and framed certain rules and ordinances. The existence of the temple in the

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34 For a detailed history of Tiruanantapuram Temple see T.K. Velupillai (1940) and M. Rajaraja Varma Raja (1928).

35 According to Sreedhara Menon (1967, 105) the Āy kingdom flourished from "early Sangam age down to the 10th century AD. ... The Ays were the earliest ruling dynasty in South Kerala. They had established an extensive kingdom of their own long before the Venad kings set themselves up as a political power in and around Quilon. In fact, up to the beginning of the 10th century A. D. the Ays were the dominant power in South Kerala and Venad was only a small principality comprised of the territories lying between Trivandrum and Quilon with its capital at the latter place."

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early eighth century is further confirmed by Nammāḻvār's[36] composition of a hymn[37] in praise of Lord of Tiruvanantapuram.[38] Temple records dating to 1050 CE (Bayi 1995, 56), a copper plate dating to 1168 CE,[39] inscriptions dating to 1196 CE (Tiruvāmbāḍi),[40] 1209 CE (*oṟṟakkalmaṇḍapa*)[41], 1601 CE (*tulābhārakkal*),[42] 1728 CE (*oṟṟakkalmaṇḍapa*), 1730 CE (*oṟṟakkalmaṇḍapa*) and 1732 CE (*oṟṟakkalmaṇḍapa*)[43] constitute further historical evidence on this temple.[44] The Veṇād and Travancore dynasties held the Tiruvanantapuram temple in great esteem and it received their official patronage. The Veṇād King Vīra Mārtāṇḍa Varma (1335–1384) gradually established complete authority over the management and administration of the temple. Among the Travancore rulers, Aniḻaṃ Tirunāḷ (1729–1758) merits special mention since it was during his period that the reclining figure of Viṣṇu, made of wood, which had sustained damage in the great fire of 1686 CE,[45] was reconstructed with 12,000 *śālagrāma* stones with a special coating known as *kaṭu-śarkara-*

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36 Hardy (1983, 266–267, 308) dates Nammāḻvār to the "seventh or early eighth century AD" while Zvelebil (1974, 107–108) dates Nammāḻvār to 880–930 AD.

37 *Tiruvāymoḻi* 10.2.

38 In the hymns of Nammāḻvār, the place name is repeatedly mentioned as "anantapura" (viz. *taṭamuṭai vayal aṉantapuranakar; alar poḻil aṉantapuranakar; taṉ ṇaṉantapuram; vayalaṇi yaṉantapuram; ceṟipoḻil aṉantapurattu; āticēra aṉantapurattu; vayalaṇiyaṉantapuram; eḻilaṇiyaṉantapuram; ceṟipoḻilaṉantapuram; poṉ matiḷṉnantapura nakar; antamil pukaḻaṉantapura nakar*). However, in the inscriptions the place name is given as "tiruvānantapura" (f. ex. Tiruvāmbāḍi inscription, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52). For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Pudussery Ramachandran in his preface to Gopalakrishnan 2012, xi–xiv.

39 Bayi 1995, 58. Bayi does not give any reference to the copper plate that she mentions.

40 Cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52. See also, Bayi 1995, 58. Apart from the 1196 CE inscription, there are two more inscriptions in the same shrine. For details of these inscriptions, see *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 44–46.

41 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. IV, Part I & II, 66–68. "The object of the inscription is apparently to register a gift of land to the temple at Tiruvānandapuram by a certain Pallavaraiyaṉ who was probably an officer of the king."

42 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, (Vol. II & III), Vol. II, Part I to III, 81–84.

43 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 81–84.

44 There are also inscriptions found in the nearby Mitrānandapuram temple connected to Tiruvanantapuram temple, some of which pertain to matters related to the Pamanābhasvāmi temple. The inscriptions that are known to have been written here are: the one written on the back wall of the Brahmā shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 25–26.), on the south wall of the Brahmā shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 26–27), at the left entrance into the Viṣṇu shrine (1486 CE; cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 27), on the south outer face of *yāḷi*-stone at the entrance of the Viṣṇu shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 28–29 and Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part I, 30), etc. For a topographical list of inscriptions found in Trivandrum, see 274–282 of *Travancore Inscriptions: A topographical list* by R. Vasudeva Poduval (1941).

45 Bayi 1995, 104. Sasibhooshan and Raja (2011, 153–154) refer to a Matilakaṃ Rekhakaḷ, leaf no. 222 dated Kollam 861 (= 1685 CE), which gives a detailed description of this fire.

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yoga; this is recorded in an inscription dated 1733 CE.[46] He is also credited with having introduced the Lakṣadīpam[47] festival.

Conclusion

Among the texts that give us details of the myth and origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple as well as its glory, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, which is in the form of a dialogue between Sūta and some sages, seems to be the most prominent one. It was written similarly to other *māhātmyas* and includes the Purāṇic stories, a brief discussion on the creation of the universe, an enumeration of the *tīrthas* surrounding the temple, etc. Most of the other known texts that explain the myth and give an account of the merits of this temple do not include the above-mentioned characteristics of *māhātmyas*. The *Anantapuravarṇana*, an early work in Maṇipravāḷa, which we discussed briefly, rather describes the temple as well as Tiruvanantapuram and the different activities that one might see there.

Though scholars date the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* and the *Anantapuravarṇana* to the fourteenth century, we do not have much internal evidence to confirm this date. But is it is possible that this *māhātmya* was composed before a great fire of 1686 CE that damaged the main icon of the reclining Viṣṇu made of wood, and before the 1733 reconstruction of the present main icon of the reclining Viṣṇu[48] with 12,000 *śālagrāma* stones coated with a special composition known as *kaṭu-śarkara-yoga*, since we do not find a reference to a figure made of *śālagrāma* in either the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* or the *Anantapuravarṇana*.

We do, however, find attestation of certain material and ritual features mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, such as the structure of the sanctum as well as certain rules followed in the temple in appointing priests. The *māhātmya* mentions a three-door sanctum (having three openings at the locations of the god's head (*śiras*), navel (*nābhi*), and feet (*pāda*)) in the temple and though this is normally not seen in other temples, it can be seen in the Tiruvanantapuram temple. Moreover, in the *māhātmya*, the sage Divākara is addressed as a *Tauḷa* (one who belongs to Tuḷudeśa) by the Lord, who instructs the sage to perform

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46 Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52; Bayi 1995, 106.

47 For a description of this festival see Venkitasubramonia Iyer 1977, 26–27. See also the tenth chapter *Lakṣadīpotsavaślākhā* in *Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham* of Svāti-Tirunāḷ (V.S. Sharma 1985, 982–992).

48 Cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 42. Bayi (1995, 106) recalls the event thus: "The main reclining figure of Sree Padmanabha Swamy was reconstructed with twelve thousand or stones sacred to Viṣṇu and coated with a special composition known as Katu-Sarkara Yoga. These stones were brought from the Gandaki river in Nepal on an elephant's back. This took place on 3rd of Painkuni 908 ME/1733 A.D. The expert makes of idols Balaranya konideva and his disciples executed this wondrous image of God. [...] This figure replaced the former idol made of Iluppa wood (Indian Butter tree) which had sustained some damage in the great fire of 861 ME/1686 A.D."

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the daily rituals and also says that he will be especially pleased by the rituals performed by Tauḷas. As we discussed earlier, even today we see that a ritual is performed every morning by a sage, known as *puṣpāñjalisvāmiyār*. We also see that in this temple, priests are appointed from the Tuḷu speaking brahmin community. This further confirms the similarities between the narratives found in the *māhātmya* and practices that are still followed in the temple. At present the chief-priests (*tantri*)[49] of this temple are from the Taraṇanallūr family, who are Nampūtiri brahmins of Kerala. This custom of appointing a Nampūtiri brahmin as chief-priest might have been a later development in the practices of the temple.

We also see in the *māhātmya* that the Lord directs sage Divākara to perform the rituals in the Tiruvanantapuram temple based on *Pauṣkara*. This might be a reference to the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* of the Pāñcarātra system. But, according to the Taraṇanallūr family members, who include the present chief-priest (*tantri*) of this temple, they follow a text known as *Anuṣṭhāna-grantham*, which is different from the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* mentioned in the *māhātmya*. While a ritual manual of fourteenth century CE, named *Tantrasamuccaya*[50] is being used in most of the temples of Kerala, the *Anuṣṭhāna-grantham* is not known outside the Taraṇanallūr family. A ritual text of Kerala named *Anuṣṭhānapaddhati* is known to exist, but further study will be required to confirm whether this manual is the same as the *Anuṣṭhāna-grantha* known exclusively to the Taraṇanallūr family.

The visit of one of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, Yāmuna, to Tiruvanantapuram, which we discussed earlier, also highlights that the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple was already known during this period. Yāmuna, while listening to the hymns on Tiruvanantapuram in Srirangam, suddenly decided to move to Tiruvanantapuram to have the vision of the Lord and stayed there for several days.

Though the Tiruvanantapuram temple has long been known as one of the important shrines of Viṣṇu in South India, the opening of some of its secret vaults and the finding of the invaluable collection of treasures stored in them made the temple further known to the world. It is worth noting that some of the vaults are yet to be opened. This discovery not only demonstrated the wealth of this temple but, by extension, also its rich and glorious past. The following words of Tiruvanantapuram Bayi (1995, 25), a member of the Travancore Royal family of Tiruvanantapuram, could be added here as a futher note attesting the glory of the temple:

> "Many characteristics of greatness are associated with a Maha Kshetra (great temple). They read as antiquity, presence of records, historical importance, origin in a forest, nearness to an ocean, location at an elevation, royal connections, mention in ancient literature, magnificence of architecture and grandeur of festivals. Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple qualifies on all these counts including its actual construction which is at a modest elevation. The enormous special

49 For a detailed discussion on the Tantris of Tiruanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 282–283.
50 For more details on the *Tantrasamuccaya*, see Sarma 2009, 332–333.

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sanctity derived from the presence of the twelve thousand Salagramas is unique in the world itself."

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Appendix I

Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya

अनन्तशयनक्षेत्रमाहात्म्यम्[51]

प्रथमोध्यायः

अनन्तभोगपर्यङ्के शयानं क्षीरसागरे।
नौमि सुन्दरराजं तं श्रीवराहतनुं हरिम् ॥ १ ॥ (सुन्दरराजान्तं ms)
सुपुण्ये नैमिषारण्ये ऋषयः शौनकादयः ।
सत्रं समासत समाः सहस्रं हरितुष्टये ॥ २ ॥
प्रातस्सवनहोमान्ते कदाचित् शौनकादयः।
सत्कृतं सूतमासीनं पप्रच्छुरिदमुत्सुकाः ॥ ३ ॥
ऋषयः—
व्यासशिष्य महाप्राज्ञ सर्वशास्त्रार्थकोविद ।
शुश्रूषतामुक्तकानामेतदाख्याहि नः शुभम्॥ ४ ॥
अनन्तशयनं नाम दक्षिणाम्बुनिधेस्तटे । (दक्स्षिणांबुनिधेस्तटे ms)
यत्र शेते स्वयं विष्णुः दर्शनान्मुक्तिदो नृणाम् ॥ ५ ॥
अनन्तभोगपर्यङ्के श्रीभूनीलानिषेवितः। (अनतभोगपर्यङ्के ms)
इत्युक्तं तु त्वया पूर्वं ब्रह्माण्डाख्यानविस्तरे ॥ ६ ॥
पृच्छामहेऽद्य तत्श्रोतुम्महत् कौतूहलं हि नः।
क्षीराब्धिशयनोऽनन्तः कुतोऽत्राविरभूद्धरिः॥ ७ ॥
कस्य प्रसन्नो भगवान् कस्मादत्रागतः स्वयम् । (कस्मादत्रागतस्वयम् ms)
एतदन्यच्च नो ब्रूहि विस्तराद्रौमहर्षणे ॥ ८ ॥
इति पृष्टस्तदा सूतः स्मृत्वानन्तासनं हरिम्।

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पुलकांकितसर्वाङ्गः सन्तोषात् गद्गदाक्षरम् ॥
प्राहेदं भक्तिभरितो वैभवं शेषशायिनः ॥ ९ ॥
श्रीसुतः —
शृण्वन्तु मुनयस्सर्वे माहात्म्यं शार्ङ्गधन्वनः (शार्गधन्वः ms)।
भोगिभोगशयोऽनन्तः सन्निधत्तेऽम्बुधेस्तटे ॥ १० ॥
अनन्तशयनं नाम क्षेत्रं तन्मुक्तिदायकम् । (अनन्तशयनन्नामक्षेत्र्न्तन्मुक्तिदायकं ms)
तदेव नारसिंहाख्यं पुण्यक्षेत्रं कृते युगे ॥ ११ ॥
प्रागुदक्प्रवणे तस्मादादिकेशवसंज्ञितम्।
क्षेत्रमाद्यं महापुण्यमाद्यनन्ताभिधं च तत् ॥ १२ ॥
एतत् क्षेत्रं महापुण्यं स्मरणान्मुक्तिदं नृणाम्।
अनेकतीर्थसंयुक्तं जनस्थाने वसन् खरः ॥ १३ ॥
रणे रामेण निहतो मुनीनात्राणकारणात्।
साक्षाद्गङ्गेव यत्रास्ते मालारूपेण केशवः ॥ १४ ॥
महेन्द्राद्रेश्च निलयादष्टयोजनदूरतः।
रामक्षेत्रे महापुण्यं योजनद्वयसंयुतम् ॥ १५ ॥
अनन्तशयनं क्षेत्रं सर्वपापहरं परम्।
यत्रागत्य हरिश्शेते शेषभोगेम्बुधेस्तटे ॥ १५ ॥
आनर्त्ते द्वारकाख्ये तु पुरे श्रीकृष्णनिर्मिते।
सर्वे निवासन्तत्रैव च कुर्युस्ता स्तपोधनाः ॥ १६ ॥ (कुर्युक्ता ms)
पिण्डारकात् कुरुक्षेत्रात् श्रीशैलाद्वेंकटाचलात्।
सालग्रामाच्च गङ्गायाः गोदावर्याश्च यामुनात् ॥ १७ ॥
समागत्याश्रमेभ्योऽत्र निवसन्ति महर्षयः।
श्रीकृष्णसेवानिरताः सर्वक्षेत्रोत्तमोत्तमे ॥ १८ ॥ (सर्वक्षेत्र ms)
तेषां मध्ये महातेजाः दिवाकरसमप्रभः।
यतिर्द्दिवाकराख्योऽभूत् सर्वकामेषु निस्पृहः ॥ १९ ॥
विरक्तस्तौलवो योगी हरिं क्षीराब्धिशायिनम्।
द्रष्टुमभ्यर्चयद्विष्णुं मुक्तिकामो जितेन्द्रियः ॥ २० ॥
स एवमर्चितो नित्यं भक्त्या चोपशमेन च।
सन्तुष्टो भगवान् विष्णुः तस्य प्रादुरभूत् पुरः ॥ २१ ॥

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सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नः कोमलाङ्गोतिसुन्दरः।
मधुरः कलभाषी च स्मितवक्त्रोब्जलोचनः॥ २२ ॥
इन्दीवरश्यामलाङ्गः कुन्ददन्तः सुनासिकः।
षडुन्नतः पञ्चरक्तः मधुराधरशोभितः ॥ २३ ॥
द्विवर्षबालसदृशो ददृशे पुरुषो यतेः।
तन्दृष्ट्वा लौकिकं बालं लावण्यकरुणालयम्॥ २४ ॥ (लावण्यवरुणालयम् ms)
सर्वसङ्गविरक्तोपि तत्संगतिसमुत्सुकः।
आलिङ्गन्निव बाहुभ्यां चुंबन्निव मुखांबुजम्॥ २५ ॥
तं बालं सहसादाय स्वांकमारोपयन्निव।
तातेति एहीत्याहैनं का ते माता च कः पिता ॥ २६ ॥ (तातेत ms)
कुतः समागतोसि त्वं वदैकं मधुराक्षरम् ।
तव वागमृतं पातुं बाल मे सत्वरं मनः॥ २७ ॥
इत्युक्तः प्राह बालोपि दयया भावशोधकः।
न जाने जननीं वापि जनकं वापि सुव्रत॥ २८ ॥
त्वं मां लालय भद्रन्ते लालनीयं सुतं यथा।
बाला हि बहुमत्यैव तुष्यन्ति निवसन्ति च॥ २९ ॥
अवमत्याहि कुप्यन्ति प्रद्रवन्ति ततः परम्।
वयन्तु बहुमानार्हाः नावमान्याः कदाचन ॥ ३० ॥
किं वा किं वा करोम्यत्र हठात् बालोतिचञ्चलः।
साद्धसाद्धपि वा कृत्यं न स्यात् बहुमतिच्युतिः ॥ ३१ ॥
न चैवावमतिः कार्या त्वया लालयता च माम्। (कार्य ms)
यदा ममावमन्ता त्वं तदान्यत्र व्रजेद्ध्रुवम् ॥ ३२ ॥
न चावमानं क्षमते बालः कुत्रापि वेत्सि तत् ।
तस्माल्लालय मां योगिन् इत्युक्त्वा विरराम सः॥ ३३ ॥
ततो दिवाकरयतिः श्रुत्वा तत् बालभाषितम्।
कलाक्षरं वागमृतं पिवन् श्रोत्रद्वयेन सः।
निर्वृतिं परमां लेभे सुधा तृप्त इवामरः ॥ ३४ ॥
तं लालयामास यतिर्म्मुदैव सन्दर्शनस्पर्शनभाषणादिभिः।
ध्यायन् सदा तं हृदयेर्चनेपि काले च योगे च तमेव दद्ध्यौ॥ ३५ ॥ (तवेम दद्ध्यौ ms)

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इति श्रीब्रह्माण्डपुराणे ब्रह्माण्डगोलविस्ताराख्याने
अनन्तशयनक्षेत्रमाहात्म्ये प्रथमोध्यायः

Selected verses from the *Padmanābhodaya*[52] of Śaṅkukavi

यत्पादपल्लवमपास्तसमस्तपापा
ध्यायन्ति चित्तकुहरे भवमोचनाय।
साक्षात् स एव भगवान् धृतबालवेष-
श्चिक्रीड सर्वकरणातिसुखं विचित्रम् ॥ २:१५ ॥
पूजानमस्कृतिविधानकृते यतीन्द्रे
नम्रेक्षणे स भगवानधिरुह्य पृष्टम्।
आलिङ्ग्य कण्ठमथ तस्य शिरःप्रदेशे
लालाम्बुसेचनविधिं रचयाञ्चकार ॥ २:१६ ॥
ध्यानान्निमीलितदृशि प्रवरे यतीना-
मूरौ निजाङ्घ्रिकमलं कलयन् मुखेन।
कर्णेऽकरोद् घुरुघुरारवमग्रसंस्थे
ध्यानं कुतो मयि तवेति वदन्निवायम् ॥ २:१७ ॥
देवाभिषेकविधया खलु कुण्डिकायां
रिक्ताम्भसीषदपि मूत्रजलेन पूर्णाम् ।
एनां विधाय च हसन् रुचिरं ननर्त
मन्मूत्रसारमशनं ब्रुवतेऽमराणाम् ॥ २:१८ ॥
पुष्पाणि वा किसलयानि फलानि योगी (किसलययानि ms)
यद्यच्चिनोति भगवत्परितोषणाय । (यद्याच्चिनोति ms)
तत्तत् स एव हि जहार विहर्तुकाम-
स्तत् स्वीकृतं न मनुते स्म परन्तु चित्रम् ॥ २:१९ ॥
वस्त्राणि दण्डफलके च कमण्डलुं च
याते क्वचिद् यतिवरे सति खेलनार्थम् ।
नीत्वा परत्र पुनरागतवत्यमुष्मिन्

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सर्वं पटच्चरहृतं स बभाण बालः ॥ २:२० ॥

...

एवं निस्सारितोऽपि प्रचुरतरकृपासागरः पद्मनाभः
किञ्चित् कोपाच्चलोष्ठस्त्वरिततरगती रक्तविस्फारिताक्षः ।
व्याहृत्यैनं यतीन्द्रं त्वमसि परमतः काननेऽनन्तसंज्ञे
दृष्टा मां शेषमञ्चे शयितमतितरामित्यगच्छत् क्षणेन ॥ २:३३ ॥

...

देवः श्रीमान् पद्मनाभोऽपि नित्यं
भक्तान् रक्षन् शेषशय्याशयानः ।
जागर्तिश्रीभूमिनीडासमेतो
वञ्चीन्द्राणां क्षेमकारी च भूयः ॥ ४:३७ ॥

Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham of Svātitirunāḷ (*Kṣetramāhātmyam*) (ed. V.S. Sarma in Malayalam Script, Trivandrum, pp. 906–915)

लक्ष्मीदिव्यकटाक्षभृङ्गनिकरोद्यानायितं सन्ततं
विश्वेषां वसतामसीमविमलानन्दौघसन्दायकम् ।
दुग्धांभोनिधिमध्यतोऽपि कमलाभर्तुः प्रियंमुक्तिदं
स्यानन्दूरपुरात्परं पदमहो जानामि नैवापरम् ॥ ४:१ ॥
अस्मिन् भुवलये सशैलविपिने न क्वापि तुल्यो बत
स्यानन्दूरपुरेण चेति विदितो लोकैः प्रदेशोपरः ।
स्वर्गे यद्यथवा रसातलपदे त्वेतादृशः स्यात्पर-
स्तावत्तत्र निवासनमिह कथं बाधः पुरे संभवेत् ॥ ४:३ ॥
नाके लभ्यमथामृतं सुमनसां पूर्वं पयोवारिधेः
सञ्जातं मथनेन तच्च महता यत्नेन नैवान्यथा ।
स्यानन्दूरपुरेऽत्र लभ्यममृतं पापीयसामप्यहो
लोकानां च विना श्रमेण वसतामानन्दसान्द्रं स्थिरम् ॥ ४:४ ॥
किं वा हन्त बहूदितेन सदृशो लोकत्रयेष्वप्यहोः
स्यानन्दूरपुरेण नैव रुचिरो जागर्ति देशः परः ।
यत्तत्रस्थजनस्य मोदजलधेः सूक्ष्मः कणोऽप्यालये
शक्रस्य त्रिदिवौकसामपि भवेल्लभ्यो न धन्यात्मनाम् ॥ ४:१७ ॥

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Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (*Mṛgayāvarṇana*)

तदानीं निस्तुलभूतदयावारानिधिः स भगवानरविन्दनाभो वध्यमृगस्थाने कल्पितं नालिकेरफलं निजचरणभृत्येन बाणदलितं कारयन् परमानन्दमाविन्दते ॥ ७: गद्यं १२ ॥

ये ये वादित्रनादाः परमिह विरताः पूर्वमाखेटयात्रा
प्रस्तावे सर्वलोकेष्वपि कलितमथो मौनमुद्रेष्वथैते ।
आरब्धास्त्वेककाले त्रिभुवनगतलोकश्रवांसि प्रकामं
कुर्वन्तो हन्त राजन्त्यमृतरसत्सरी संभृतानीह तावत् ॥ ७:५ ॥ (रसझरी ed)

Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (*Abhiṣekayātrāvarṇana*)

बाले पश्य रमापतिं त्रिजगतां नाथं मुदामेयया
चायान्तं विनतासु तस्य सुमहास्कन्धाधिरूढं हरिम् ।
व्योमस्थायिसमस्तदेवनिकरैः संस्तूयमानं कर-
स्रस्तस्वर्विटपिप्रसूननिकरैरंघ्रिद्वयांभोजयोः ॥ ८:१७ ॥

Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (*Lakṣadīpavarṇanam*)

दीपानां प्रभया नभोविततया श्रीलक्षदीपोत्सवे
तेजोरुद्धदृशः सुरासुरगणा विद्याधराः किन्नराः ।
यक्षाः किंपुरुषाश्च चारणगणा गन्धर्वमुख्यास्तदा
निश्चेष्टाः खलु विस्मयेन तु भवन्त्येते नराः किं पुनः ॥ १०:६ ॥

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Importance of Water Bodies in the *Māhātmyas* in the Kāverī Region[1]

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Water reservoirs have always challenged the imagination of the inhabitants of India for obvious reasons, which are also valid in other cultures. Water not only gives life, ensuring vegetation, but also, through its natural and sometimes unbridled power, resembles gods or rather goddesses. Therefore, rivers are often personified as females. The topic of Indian rivers as constituents of both the natural and cultural landscapes of India has already been treated by scholars, among them Indologists.[2] It is also an element of the ongoing project within which we are working on various South Indian *māhātmyas* (glorifications). In this contribution we would like to concentrate on the particular region irrigated by the South Indian river Kāverī and the *māhātmyas* that praise various Vaiṣṇava sacred sites along the river and the Kāverī itself.

Working for some time on the *māhātmyas* of the holy *kṣetra* (area) of the South Indian temple town Śrīraṅgam, we cannot overlook the importance of water and the river for this place, but also for the whole region. Therefore, in our contribution, using the example of the ten-chapter version of the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* and passages from some other texts of this genre, we would like to investigate how nature, especially the river and other water bodies, is present in the process of shaping the place which, also due to its natural specifics, becomes suitable for the worship of god. We ask in which way the river and water reservoirs connected with it are present in the religious literature, and how natural phenomena are used to build the position and authority of a holy spot.

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2 See e.g., Feldhaus 1990, Eck 2013, Krishna 2017.

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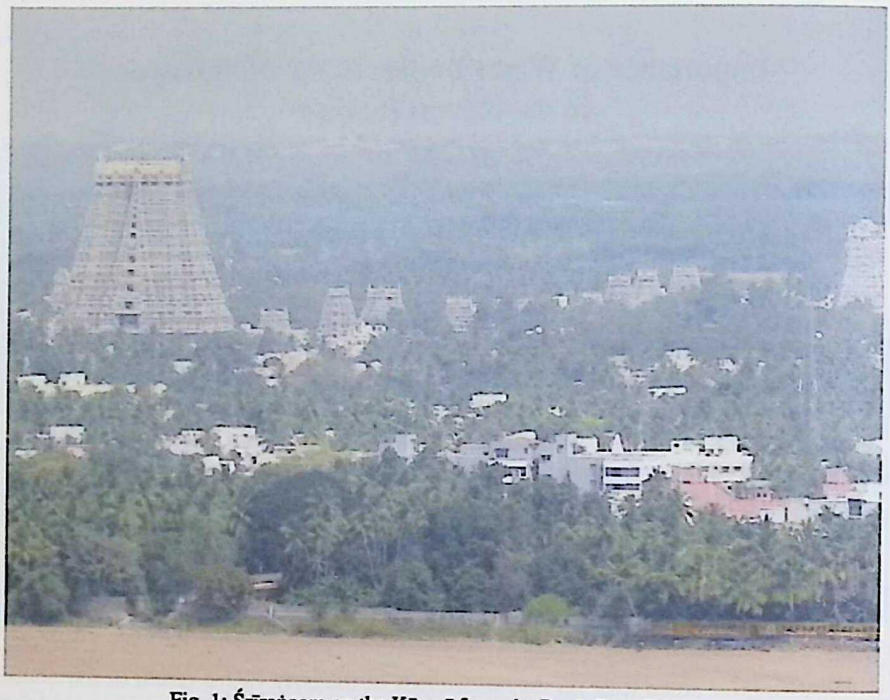

Fig. 1: Śrīraṅgam on the Kāverī from the Rock Fort, Trichy (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

Śrīraṅgam and the Raṅganātha Temple

Śrīraṅgam as a holy spot can be dated probably to the late sixth and early seventh century CE, as for example recent work of Eva Wilden shows, presenting some passages from early Āḻvārs' poetry in which Araṅkam as a sacred spot appears[3] (Orr (1995) suggests the sixth century CE). It constitutes one of the biggest Hindu temple complexes not only in India but also in the world.[4] The temple, situated on an island between Kāverī and Koḷḷiṭam rivers, has seven enclosures (*prākāras*). Consequently, it should have 28 temple gates (*gopuras*; four in every enclosure), but not all of them have been finished. The largest of them, the *rājagopura*, was finished only in 1987.

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3 Wilden (2020, 1) writes: "The three old *Tiruvantāti-s* by Poykai-, Pūtam- and Pēyāḻvār form, together with the small oeuvre of Kāraikālammaiyār on the Śaiva side, the earliest works of bhakti literature transmitted in Tamil, or in fact, for that matter, in the whole of India." The name Tiruvaraṅkam (Śrīraṅgam) appears in the texts of these early Āḻvārs six times.

4 Jeannine Auboyer (2006) writes that it covers an area of about 631,000 square meters (156 acres) with a perimeter of four km.

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Fig. 2: Śrīraṅgam temple *vimāna* (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

Viṣṇu is worshipped in the Raṅganātha temple in a monumental sculpture representing the god reclining on the snake Śeṣa.[5] The fame of the temple is such that it is called simply *kōyil*, "the temple". It is one of the few places in which both the particular iconographical form of Viṣṇu and his shrine (*vimāna*) are of the self-manifested type (*svayamvyakta/svayambhuva*). The *vimāna* is described in the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya*[6] (3.33cd) as *divyaṃ vimānaṃ taṃ dṛṣṭvā svayaṃvyaktaṃ maharddhimat* ("having seen that prosperous, divine self-manifested shrine ..."). Out of eight self-manifested temples, Śrīraṅgam is enumerated in the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* as the first one.[7]

5 The sculpture in the *sanctum sanctorum* (*mūlasthāna*) is seven meters in width.

6 *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* (claiming to be a part of *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*). Cited according to the authors' ongoing critical edition and translation. This is the text meant when we generally refer to the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* hereafter.

7 *ādyaṃ svayaṃvyaktam idaṃ vimānaṃ raṅgasaṃjñikam* ||
śrīmuṣṇaṃ veṅkaṭādriṃ ca sālagrāmaṃ ca naimiśam |
tottādriṃ puṣkaraṃ caiva naranārāyaṇāśramam || *Śrīraṅgamāhātmyam* 5.27c–28.

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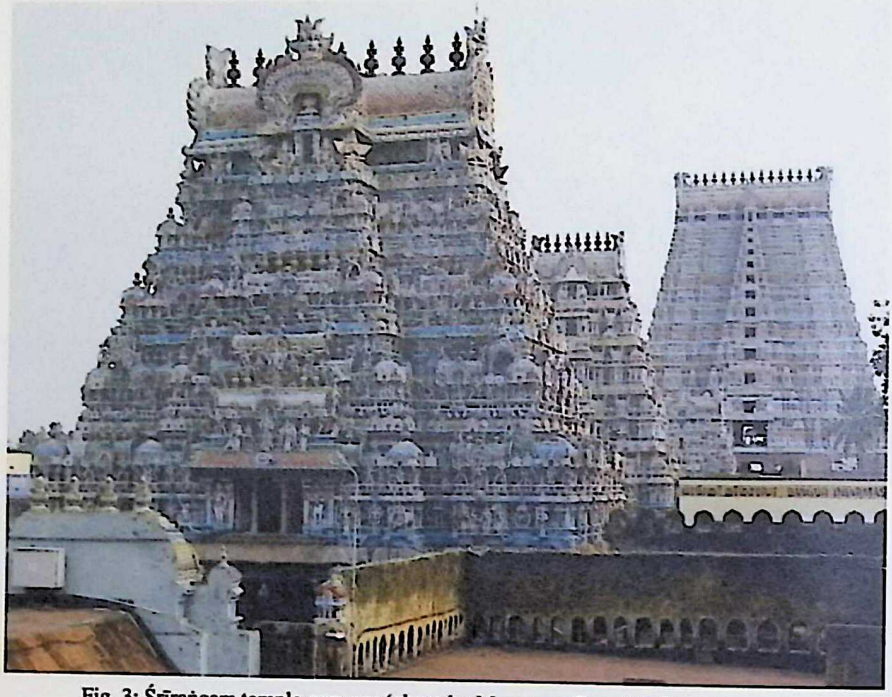

Fig. 3: Śrīraṅgam temple *gopuras* (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

In its long history the Raṅganātha temple was in the scope of interest of many dynasties beginning from the Pallavas up to the Nāyakas, who participated in its development through the building of subsequent enclosures, new shrines and temple gates.[8] These kings not only contributed to the architecture of temples, but they also made numerous land and other endowments for conducting regular worship as well as temple festivals. The temple also owes much to the famous religious teacher and philosopher Rāmānuja (eleventh–twelfth century CE), the exponent of the *viśiṣṭā-dvaitavedānta* and one of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, who re-organized the temple life and administration, making the temple a powerful center with substantial economic and political influence.

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8 Spencer writes that history of the temple has a political dimension and is a mixture of patronage and plunder, royal donations and political intervention in its internal deeds, even from the side of its ostentatious protectors: "Nor were the temple's political problems all external ones: like other complex institutions, large temples like the one at Śrīraṅgam were prone to internal conflicts, reflecting not only the ambitions of individuals, but also jealousies and rivalries among groups of temple servants over the control of specific duties and perquisites. Such internal tensions were readily aggravated by external pressures and wider societal crises" (Spencer 1978, 14).

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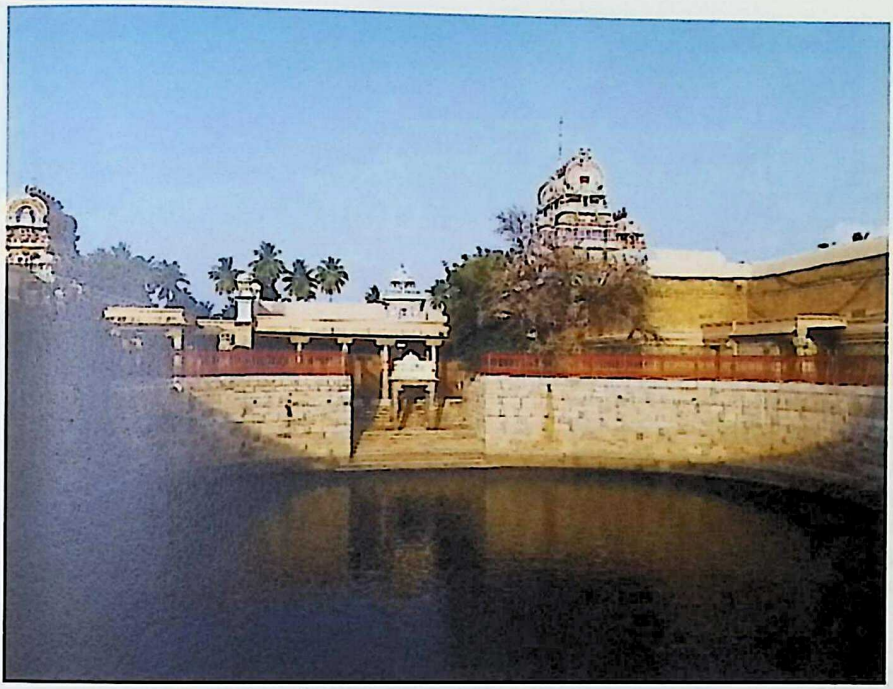

Fig. 4: Candrapuṣkariṇī at the Śrīraṅgam temple (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

The history of the temple is attested in one complete volume of the *South Indian Inscriptions* (volume XXIV: Inscriptions of the Raṅganāthasvāmi temple, Śrīraṅgam) in nearly 640 inscriptions, which form one of the most important sources of our knowledge about it (Hari Rao 1967, 4–13). The second source, the *Kōyil Oḻuku* (fourteenth–eighteenth century according to Orr 1995), a temple chronicle, provides information concerning the reforms of Rāmānuja.[9] Introducing the Pāñcarātrika ritualistic system, Rāmānuja re-arranged the temple administration, and appointed particular duties to specific groups of temple functionaries.[10] However, as Orr observes by consulting more than 200 inscriptions from the ninth to fourteenth centuries CE, these changes

9 Konduri Sarojini Devi 1990. Already in the tenth century, Nāthamuni, who held the position of temple manager (*śrīkāryam*), introduced the hymns of the Āḻvārs to the Śrīraṅgam liturgy (Orr 1995).

10 In the chapter "Religious Institutions: The Temple", Konduri Sarojini Devi (1990) mentions the classification attested in the *Kōyil Oḻuku*. Among these ten groups were *sthānikas/ sthānattars* who issued all temple documents; priests called *pūjāris*; heads of the temple administration known as *senāpatis*; *durandharas*, who, for example, took care of a temple seal *mudrā* and of sacrificial substances *dravyas*; there were also *pārupatyagārs* controlling the work of other workers in the temple and many others to whom Rāmānuja gave name, duties and hereditary right to continue the service.

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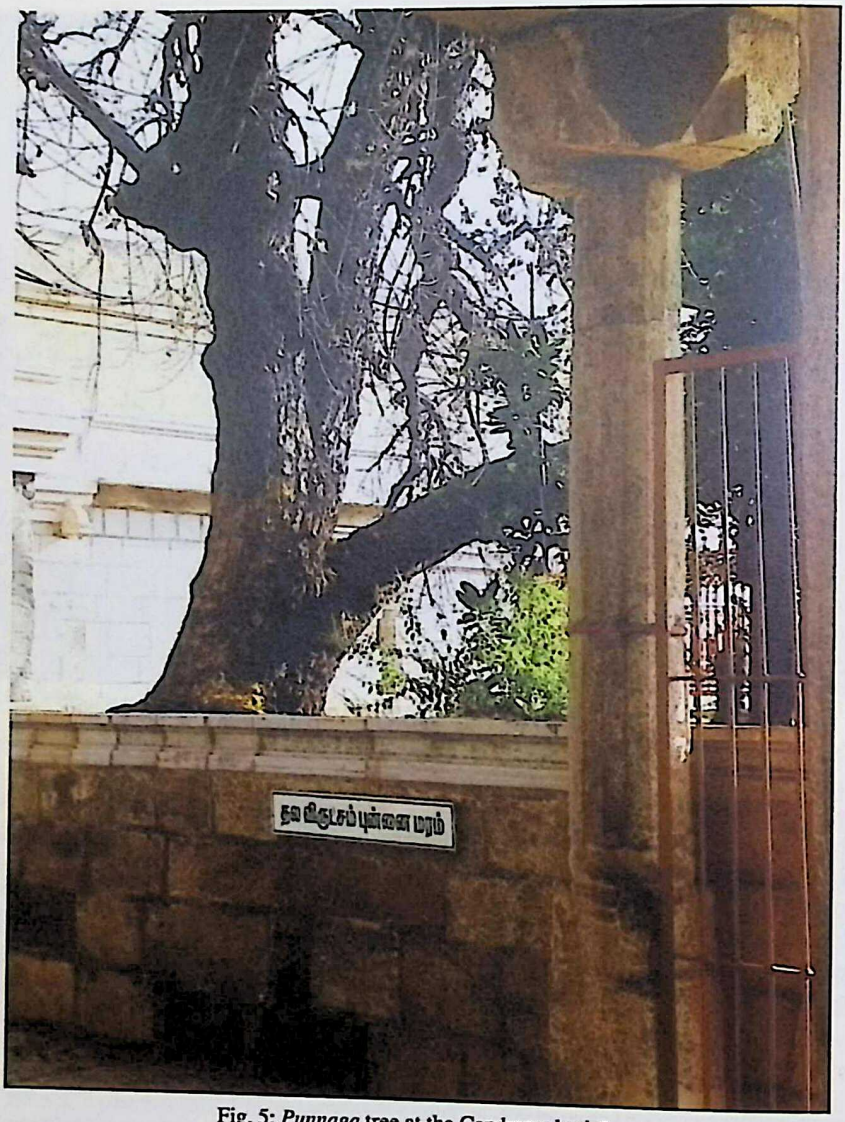

Fig. 5: *Punnaga* tree at the Candrapuṣkariṇī
(photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

are not attested in them (Orr 1995, 121). Nevertheless, tradition has it that the duties were assigned to members of all four *varṇas*, therefore also Śūdras have their role in temple life. In this way, all the functions were distributed among the members of the diverse Vaiṣṇava communities and they are until now continued in the particular

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families.[11] Rāmānuja also dedicated to the temple one of his three religious hymns in prose form (*gadyas*), entitled the *Śrīraṅgagadya*.[12]

Māhātmyas of Śrīraṅgam

The next important source of our knowledge about Śrīraṅgam are the above-mentioned *māhātmyas*. One is included in chapter 10 (verses 108ff.) of the Pāñcarātrika text *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*. Apart from this, a number of independent texts known as *Śrīraṅgamāhātmyas* exist. Hari Rao (1967, 1) mentions two *māhātmyas*: *Daśādhyāyī* (Ten-chaptered) and *Śatādhyāyī* (Hundred-chaptered), though he does not give any detailed reference to these texts. A text with the name *Śatādhyāyī* has been published in 2012 in Śrīraṅgam, bearing the title *Śrī Garuḍapurāṇokta Śrīraṅgamāhātmyam* (*Śatādhyāyī*). This Sanskrit text is printed in Devanāgarī. The same text was published in Tamil script in the same year under the title *Srī Karuṭapurāṇōkta Srīraṅkamāhātmyam*. Yet another text, based on a *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya*, entitled *Sriranga mahatmyam (in Tamil), culled from various Purāṇas* was published in 1935.[13] In addition, David Shulman (1980) mentions in his bibliography a *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* published in 1908 in Tiruccirāppaḷḷi. The *māhātmya* on which we are working can possibly be identified with the *Daśādhyāyī* mentioned by Hari Rao. It is a text in Sanskrit printed in Telugu script and published in Chennai in 1875.[14]

The story of the temple known from these sources mentions a Cōḻa king whose name is Dharmavarma, but who is not known from historical records. He is supposed to have built the temple, which was subsequently covered with sand due to a flood and was then forgotten. It was yet another Cōḻa king, named Kiḷḷi, who saw the temple in his dream, rediscovered and renovated it. His name probably refers to the fact that it was a parrot (in Tamil *kiḷi*) which helped him to find the forgotten temple. The *māhātmya*, and also the *Kōyil Oḻuku* (chronicle of the Śrīraṅgam temple) evoke a Cōḻa king as a builder of the temple located on the island between two rivers Kāverī and Koḷḷiṭam. According to the above-mentioned sources and the *māhātmya* itself, the main shrine (*śrīraṅgavimāna*) has a *svayaṃvyakta* representation of the god Viṣṇu in the form known as Raṅganātha. He appeared from the ocean due to intense ascetic practice of Brahmā, who appointed the sun-god Sūrya to accompany him in the daily worship of Raṅganātha. Ikṣvāku, a descendant of Sūrya, took the *vimāna* from the abode of Brahmā (*brahmaloka*) to Ayodhyā. The shrine was worshipped there for a long time before the prince Rāma gave it as a gift to Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhīṣana, who had come from Laṅkā. Vibhīṣana took the *vimāna* on his head, and on his way back to Laṅkā he approached the bank of the Kāverī river, where he

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11 On this classification and detailed description of the duties of these groups see for example Jagannathan 1994.

12 The three *gadyas* are the *Śaranāgatigadya*, the *Śrīraṅgagadya* and the *Śrīvaikuṇṭhagadya*.

13 This is probably a modern English summary.

14 We owe the copy from the British Library to Prof. Ute Hüsken.

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decided to have a rest. When he woke up on the next morning, he realized that the *vimāna* remained stuck to the ground. In despair, Vibhīṣaṇa began to cry. Seeing him like that, the Cōḻa king Dharmavarma comforted him, explaining that the god obviously preferred to stay on the Kāverī river side. To show his mercy to Vibhīṣaṇa, Viṣṇu would rest in the *vimāna* lying with his face directed to the south, towards Laṅkā. When Vibhīṣaṇa returned to Laṅkā, Dharmavarman built a temple around the *vimāna* in Śrīraṅgam, which is known as "Vaikuṇṭha on Earth" (*bhūlokavaikuṇṭha*).

Among the subjects which are treated by the *māhātmyā*, there are some which we would like to elaborate more and which are connected with water. One is the notion of the nine ponds (*nava tīrthas*) of Śrīraṅgam. The tenth chapter of the *māhātmya* entitled *navatīrthaprabhāvavarṇanam* "description of the appearance of the nine *tīrthas*" refers to this issue. In this text, all nine ponds are associated with a *maṇḍapa* and with a specific tree. However, in many places the trees are not to be found today. In this text, the main Candrapuṣkariṇī pond is associated with the *punnāga* tree (*Rottleria tinctoria*) and is located in the center of the area. Further *tīrthas*-with-trees are: Bilva Tīrtha (bell-fruit, *Aegle marmelos*) to the east and in front of Candrapuṣkariṇī, Jambu Tīrtha (*Eugenia jambolana*) in the south-east, Aśvattha Tīrtha (*Ficus religiosa*) in the south, Palāśa Tīrtha (*Butea frondosa*) in the south of Aśvattha and in the west (south-west), Punnāga Tīrtha (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) in the west, Bakula Tīrtha (*Mimusops elengi*) in the north-west, Kadamba Tīrtha (*Nauclea cadamba*) in the north, and Āmra Tīrtha (*Mangifera indica*) in the north-east.[15] These nine ponds (*tīrthas*) continue to exist mostly unharmed even today, except Bilva Tīrtha.[16]

Riverine Region of Kāverī

Since our supposition is that water bodies play an important role in shaping not only natural but also religious landscape, we would like to concentrate now on the river Kāverī itself. The river was present in the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya*'s story of the beginnings of the holy spot, but the same text contains some more passages referring to the Kāverī. One of them refers to a discussion between Gaṅgā and Kāverī concerning

15 During our field research from February 10, 2020 to February 12, 2020 (together with Mr. Ramaswamy Babu, École Française d'Extrême Orient, Pondicherry) we visited all nine *tīrthas*, checked their actual positions and documented/photographed their present state. The result of this research will be presented soon.

16 We cannot say anything certain about the dating of the ponds and also of the *māhātmya*, although we could take Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār's (around seventh century CE) words from *Tiruccantaviruttam* song 50 (*eṇṭicaik kaṇaṅkaḷum iṟaiñciyāṭu tīrtta nīr*—"where *gaṇas* (*dikpālas*?) from eight directions come to worship and bathe in its purifying waters [from Candrapuṣkariṇī?]") as alluding to deities being protectors of the eight directions. Nevertheless, even if these eight deities came to the holy spot, there is no direct statement about the existence of the eight separate ponds. As for the *māhātmya* itself, similarly to other texts of this kind, it could have been created from around sixteenth century CE.

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their superiority, which is described in the ninth chapter, entitled *Dharmavarmakṛtaśrīraṅgotsavaḥ* ("The festival of Śrīraṅga executed by Dharmavarma").[17] In addition to these references in the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya*, the river is present in several other text passages of Sanskrit and Tamil literature. Being very much in the minds of the inhabitants of the region, the river is also praised in further texts of the *māhātmya* genre.

The culture-establishing role of the Kāverī river cannot be overlooked when talking about Śrīraṅgam and the *tīrthas* along this river. It can be seen, for example, from the fact that the community of inhabitants of this area is sometimes even called the "Kāverī community". Before referring to the textual sources describing the role of the river in the development of regional culture, it is worth mentioning some ancient material creations connected with the river. The practical usage of its water and the role in irrigation systems of the region is demonstrated, for example, by the Kallanai Dam, one of the splendid examples of early Indian technology, known also as Grand Anicut. It was built in Thogur - Koviladi village (Budalur Taluk in Thanjavur District) by, as tradition has it, the ruler of the Cōḻa dynasty named Karikālaṉ already in the second century CE. Writing about the dam, G. Deivanayagam and R. Paranthaman, the authors of the book entitled *Kallanai Kaveri* (2012), date it even to second century BCE. They also speak about the novelty of the project and its impact on the construction of a modern dam on the Godavari river.[18] Deivanayagam and Paranthaman argue that from the mentions in Sangam literature one can deduce that the region under the Cōḻas was rich in water, testifying not only to the existence of the dam at that time but also to its effectiveness. We are not in the position to establish the date of the dam, but it is definitely a very early and very elaborate example of technical advancement of the region as far as irrigation is concerned.

Yet another author, Aravamuthan,[19] in his thesis entitled *The Kaveri, The Maukharis and the Sangam Age*, among other things speaks about Karikālaṉ's project of raising the Kāverī embankments to prevent floods.[20] He writes about an abundance of water in Cōḻa times which seems to be attested also in the still-used name of the region which is Puṉal Nāṭu – "the land well-watered", though the name, due to floods, is sometimes understood as "the land of floods" (Aravamuthan 1925, 8). However, one has to remember that the present-day Kāverī is not exactly the same as the one known

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17 We include the Sanskrit texts and English translations of the passage in the Appendix of this chapter.

18 The Godavari dam was constructed in the nineteenth century by general Arthur Cotton, who designed it after the Grand Anicut. He even made a cross-section of the dam to investigate and copy details of its construction.

19 The king Karikālaṉ and his construction of the dam was the subject of thesis of T. G. Aravamuthan (1925).

20 Aravamuthan takes as a starting point the Tamil text *Kaliṅgattuparaṇi* by Jayaṅgoṇḍāṉ. The text eulogizes the poet's patron, Kulottuṅga Cōḻa I (1070–1120 CE), for having conquered Kaliṅga, and in the genealogy of the king given in the text Karikālaṉ also appears.

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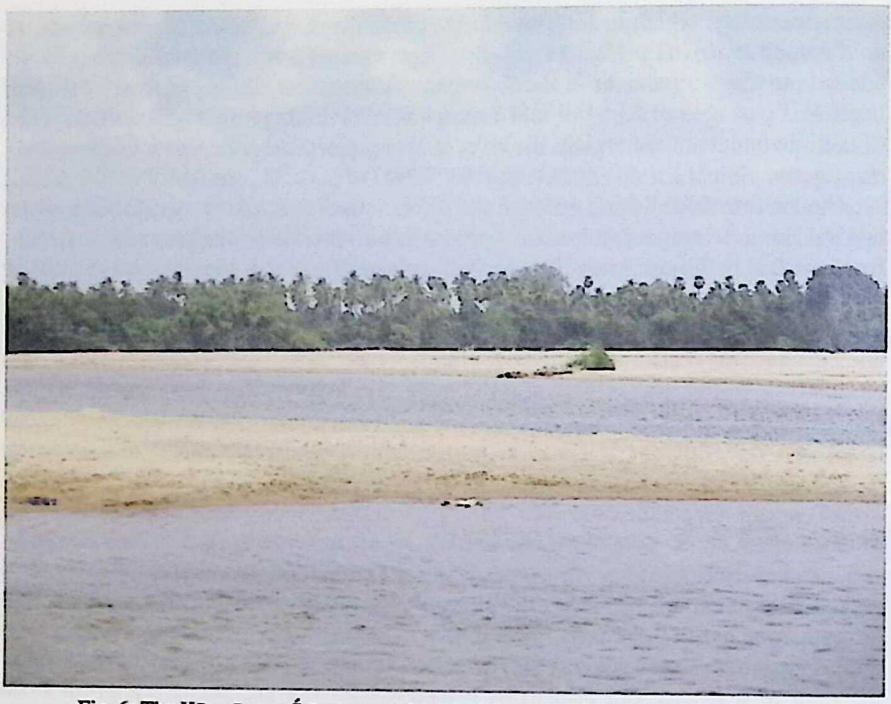

Fig. 6: The Kāverī near Śrīraṅgam (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

from history, and for example the role of its mouth at Kāverippaṭṭiṇam previously was much more significant. In his quite elaborate argument concerning king Karikālaṉ, Aravamuthan observes that from the various literary and epigraphic sources he used, it is difficult to establish the exact date of the king. However, these sources attribute to Karikālaṉ the construction not only of the river's embankments, but also of a dam or a barrage across the river. The author tries to establish the dates of the dam, though sources are scarce and their dating is often not decisive or simply unknown. Therefore, ascribing the dam to as early as the second century BCE or to the seventh century CE seems equally provisional and uncertain.[21] Aravamuthan speaks of the existence of an "Old Kāverī" or even of the existence of two Kāverīs, which might have been distinct from the presently existing one (Aravamuthan 1925, 73). In any case, the river had a significant impact on the inhabitants of the region for many centuries, and its history still today preoccupies the minds of scholars.

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21 See for example the passage "Embankments and dams" (Aravamuthan 1925, 67–71). As in the case of the previously mentioned authors (Deivanayagam and Paranthaman), Aravamuthan also is cautious about the dates and identity of Karikālaṉ himself as well as Mukari, Mukharis and their conquest by this king. Nevertheless, the great irrigation-directed achievements of the Cōḻas, and probably even the early Cōḻas, were noticeable, if not spectacular.

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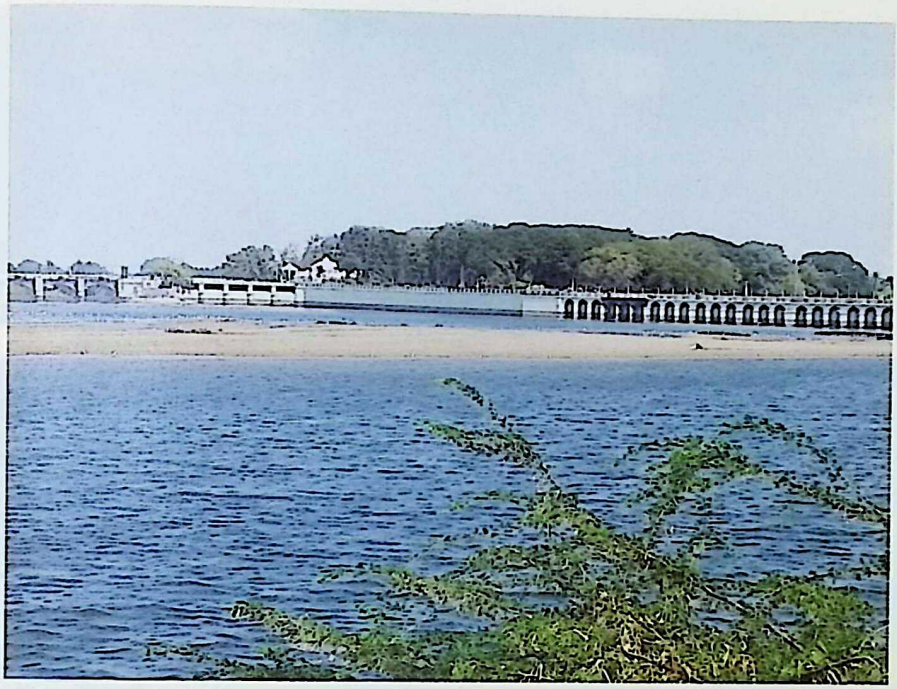

Fig. 7: Grand Anicut (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

Sanskrit Sources Referring to the Kāverī

The Kāverī has been referred to in Śaiva scriptures such as the *Niśvāsamukha* (3.4), *Ajitāgama* (84.7c–8b), *Makuṭāgama* (4.232), etc., and in Vaiṣṇava scriptures such as the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* (10.276). Apart from these Āgamas, also the *Mahābhārata* (supplementary passages to *Ādiparvan*: 1.2031.01–03) and many Purāṇas like *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10.79.013–14) mention the river Kāverī. The river has also been referred to by many Sanskrit literary authors like Daṇḍin (*Daśakumāracarita*, p.159, sixth *ucchvāsa*) and Kālidāsa (*Raghuvaṃśa* 4.45), which shows the significance of the river Kāverī in Southern India.[22]

In the introductory notes of his book addressing the text of the Tamil *Kāvēri Rahasyam*, P. Makātēva Ayyar (1962) refers to many literary sources addressing the Kāverī, among them also Sanskrit texts, from which he provides some quotations. He lists fourteen titles.[23]

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22 For these passages as well as some examples from Tamil literature, see the Appendix at the end of this chapter.

23 1) *Smṛtimuktāphalam* of Vaidyanātha, 2) *Śrīmadbhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavatapurāṇa*), 3) (Keralan)

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Among the Sanskrit *stotras* which Ayyar cites, the *Kāveryaṣṭaka* contains a kind of eulogy of the river:

marudvṛdhe mānya [mānye?] jalapravāhe
kaverakanye namatāṃ śaraṇye |
mānye vidher mānasaputri saumye
kāveri kāveri mama prasīda ॥ 1 ॥

"O Marudvṛddhā, Honorable Current of water!
O Daughter of Kavera, O you protecting those who salute you!
O Honorable, and pleasant mind-born daughter of Vidhi [Brahmā],
Kāverī, Kāverī, show me your grace!"

Yet another source, namely Brahmakaivartapurāṇa (in *Sri Kaveri Mahima and Stotras*, Chennai 2017), explains the name of the river in such a way:

kākāraḥ kaluṣaṃ hanti, vekāro vāñchitapradaḥ
rīkāro mokṣado nṛṇāṃ kāverīty avadhāraya ॥

"[The syllable] *kā* removes sin, *ve* bestows what is desired,
rī gives emancipation to people, as such understand [the name] Kāverī."

In all the texts enumerated by P. Makātēva Ayyar there are portions sometimes of substantial length dedicated to the Kāverī. Clearly, the mythology developing around this river was quite elaborate and the interest in it was significant.

Inscriptions

Apart from Purāṇic literature, which, as we have seen, praises her as the one of the most important rivers of the subcontinent, Kāverī is also mentioned in some South Indian inscriptions. Here we would like to mention famous old inscriptions, which are from the Pallava cave in the Tiruccirāppaḷḷi Rock Fort, very close to Śrīraṅgam itself. They appear on the two pillars on the left and right side of the Śiva Gaṅgādhara relief in the Upper Cave.[24] These inscriptions are dated to the times of the Pallava king Mahendra I (ca. 590–630 CE), who is called Satyasaṃdha in the inscriptions. They consist of thirteen and sixteen lines respectively and are written in Sanskrit in Grantha script. In *South Indian Inscriptions* Vol. 1, Hultzsch gives the wording and an English translation for of both of them.[25] The text and translation of the first one begins as follows:

Nārāyaṇīya, 4) *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, 5) *Brahmapurāṇa*, 6) *Kāveristotra* of Dunḍirājā-vyāsa, 7) *Mahārthamañjarīparimala* of Mahevarananda, 8) *Śivalīlāvarṇanā* of Nīlakaṇṭhadī-kṣita, 9) *Sahyajanavaratnamālikā* of Raju Sastri (twentieth century?), 10) *Brahmakaivarta-purāṇa*, 11) *Skandapurāṇa*, 12) *Agneyapurāṇa*, 13) *Kāveryaṣṭaka*, 14) *Kāveribhujaṅgastotra*.

24 See figures 8 and 9.

25 Hultzsch 1890, 28–31, no 33 and 34.

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Fig. 8: Gaṅgādhara relief, Upper Cave, Trichy (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

kāverīnnayanābhirāmasalilāmārāmamālādharām
devovīkṣya nadīpriyaḥ priyaguṇām apy eṣa rajyed iti |
sāsaṃkā girikanyakā pitṛkulaṃ hitveva manye girau
nityan tiṣṭhati pallavasya dayitām etāṃ bruvāṇā nadīm ||

(verse 1) "Being afraid, that the god who is fond of rivers (*Śiva*), having perceived the Kāvīrī, whose waters please the eye, who wears a garland of gardens, and who possesses lovely qualities, might fall in love (*with her*), the daughter of the mountain (*Pârvati*) has, I think, left her father's family and resides permanently on this mountain, calling this river the beloved of the Pallava (*king*)."

Inscription no 34, on the pillar to the right, reads:

vibhūtiś coḷānāṃ katham aham avekṣeya vipulāṃ
nadīṃ vā kāverīṃ avanibhavanāvasthita iti |
hareṇoktaḥ prītyā vibhur adiśad abhraṃliham idaṃ
anuprakhyo rājye garibhavanam asmai guṇabharaḥ ||

"After Hara (Śiva) had graciously asked him: "How could I, standing in a temple on earth, view the great power of the Cholas or the river Kāveri?" – king

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Guṇabhara, who resembled Manu in his manner or ruling, assigned to him this mountain-temple, which touches the clouds."[26]

As we see from this inscriptional material, the river Kāverī's imagery as an important element of the cultural landscape was very much in the minds of the early kings of the region and their poets who were using the Kāverī motif in verses praising their sponsors. For the Pallavas it seemed to be important and meaningful to establish their own temple, endowed with characteristic elements of their style, in the far southern parts of their kingdom marked by the holy river Kāverī, to notify their dominance over the early Cōḻas, whom they defeated.

Religious Dimension

Very often in religious observances all seven sacred rivers are present, and they may be invoked before ritual practice is commenced:

gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvati |
narmade sindhu kāveri jale 'smin sannidhiṃ kuru ॥ [*Merutantra* 5.68]

"O river Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī, be present in this water!"

Here the religious practitioner invokes the water of all seven sacred rivers in the water pot that is used to sprinkle all worshipping materials to be used for the rituals. This ritual act shall purify the worshipping materials.

Perceived as the Gaṅgā of the South, the Kāverī was and is an extremely important natural element of Tamil culture with many holy places and shrines built along its stream as well as the spectacular Śrīraṅgam temple situated on the island between the Kāverī and its branch Koḷḷiṭam.[27] As we will see, the specific features of the region influenced the authors of the religious scriptures to create stories about, for example, the origins of the sacred spots and the river itself. Geographic and natural specifics of the region of Kāverī delta were in immediate relation to the developments within religious traditions flourishing there. For the pious Vaiṣṇavas, the pilgrimage along the Kāverī leads them through several holy spots on both sides of the river, and culminates in the vision of the wonderful island, which even attracted the god himself, so he, in the mythological past, decided to reside there. The abundance of water enabled the establishment of not only one, but, as we know, several *tīrthas* in the temple precincts and nearby. The *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* mentions

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26 These inscriptions were also in the scope of interest of Emmanuel Francis who spoke about them and provided a French translation within the framework of the *Archaeology of Bhakti* workshop in Pondicherry (2011). I am grateful to S.A.S. Sarma (École Française d'Extrême Orient, Pondicherry) for drawing my attention to these inscriptions and for providing me with some information about them (M.C.-D.).

27 One finds some observations about the riverine region of Kāverī, for example, in the book entitled *Eternal Kaveri* edited by Michell and Arni (1999).

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Fig. 9: Kāverī inscription, Gaṅgādhara relief, Upper Cave, Trichy (photo by Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz).

not only Candrapuṣkariṇī, also equated with the Kāverī and through this with the Gaṅgā, but also eight other holy tanks associated with the Raṅganātha temple. The temple is an especially important pilgrimage center, equated with heaven on earth (*bhūlokavaikuṇṭha*), but along the river there are some more *raṅgas*, which are specific Viṣṇu's temples. The tradition speaks about five such *raṅgas*, calling them *pañcaraṅgas*.[28] These are: 1) Śrīraṅganātha temple in Srirangapatnam (located in

28 See for example Krishna 2017 and Dalal 2011 (in the Raṅganātha entry).

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Karnataka), 2) Śrīraṅganātha temple in Srirangam, 3) Appala Raṅganātha temple in Koviladi (near Lalgudi), known also as Sri Appakkuṭathān Perumāḷ, 4) Śarṅgapāṇi temple in Kumbhakonam or Trivikrama temple near Sirkali, and 5) Parimaḷa Ranganātha temple in Indaluru (Mayiladuturai).[29]

We understand *raṅga* or *pañcaraṅga* as temple/five temples or land in between two rivers as an island, based on the meaning given in the Tamil Lexicon,[30] quoting from the earliest Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram*, "The Tale of Anklet" by Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ (fifth or sixth century CE). Thus, Śrīraṅgam on the island between Kāverī and Koḷḷiṭam, Koviladi between Kāverī and Koḷḷiṭam, Indalur between Kāverī and Vennar, Kumbhakonam between Kāverī and Arasalar and Srirangapatnam between Kāverī and another river, whose name is not known to us.[31]

Kāverī *Māhātmyas*

As we have mentioned, the role of the Kāverī is reflected in the development of Kāverī-bound mythology as well as in the texts dedicated to or talking about the river, among them *māhātmyas*. Recently we were able to consult a Sanskrit text (in Devanāgarī script) entitled *Tulakāverimāhātmya*, and (to a limited extent) a Tamil text entitled *Kāvēri Rahasyam*, but there are certainly many more, and, as in the case of many other *māhātmyas*, they often claim to belong to specific Purāṇas. Thus, the river has its own *sthalapurāṇa*, but the story of its appearance as well as the story establishing her dominant role can also be found in other sources referring to the region. These texts attracted the attention of the British historian and archeologist Lewis Rice. We can find some data about the existence of the *māhātmyas* dedicated to the Kāverī for example in his *Mysore and Coorg* vol. III, being a part of *Mysore Gazetteer* (Rice 1878, vol. III). Rice writes in the chapter entitled *History. Legendary Period* (Rice 1878, 87-93) about a *Kāverī Purāṇa* which he equates with a *Kāverī Māhātmya*. He adds that this text can be treated as a legendary account of the history of the Coorg region. This text claims to form chapters 11–14 of the *Skāndapurāṇa* or *Kārttikeya Purāṇa*. As Rice reports, the *māhātmya* describes the river from its source up to the sea, mentioning several holy *tīrthas* and temples along its banks. Rice suspects that this Brahmanical text was supposed to subjugate the Coorgs to the Brahmins, but being written in Sanskrit, it did not attract much attention and respect from this community.[32]

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29 Apart from the nine Śrīraṅgam *tīrthas*, these *pañcaraṅga* temples are also within our scope of interest and some results of our research will be presented soon.

30 The Tamil Lexicon mentions: அரங்கம் *araṅkam*, n. < *raṅga*. Island formed by a river or rivers, delta: ஆற்றிடைக்குறை. ஆற்றுவியரங்கத்து (சிலப்பதிகாரம் 10.156).

31 However, for example, Adalbert J. Gail (2016) understands the term *raṅga* differently, referring it to the theatre and the stage.

32 He writes: "The numerous passages inculcating the duty of the valiant Coorgs to offer to the

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The beginnings of the Kāverī story recalled by Rice are connected with the *ṛṣi* Agastya. The story starts out from the known Purāṇic episode about the Asuras stealing the *amṛta*, which was produced during the churning of the milk ocean. The desperate gods asked Viṣṇu for help and Mohinī emanated from him, while Lakṣmī sent Lopāmudrā, a form of Pārvatī. Mohinī charmed the Asuras, then rescued the *amṛta* and gave it back to the gods. Then she rested at Brahmagiri, which is the hill at the source of Kāverī. Mohinī was then changed into a cave, while Lopāmudrā was brought up by Brahmā as his daughter. The story then tells of the sage Kavera, a devotee of Brahmā, who retired to Brahmagiri, where he meditated on Brahmā and asked him for children. Brahmā gave him Lopāmudrā as daughter, and for this reason she obtained the name Kāverī. Since she wanted to procure grace for her new father, she decided to become a river, which would pour out blessings on the earth, and the sage Kavera would acquire all the merits of this act. Thus, she turned into a river and asked Brahmā to give her the power of absolving people who bath in her holy waters from sins they committed also in their previous lives. Brahmā granted her this power. Then one day Kāverī was asked by the *ṛṣi* Agastya to become his wife. She consented, but on condition that she would have the right to leave him whenever she was left alone. When one day Agastya was bathing in the river Kānakā, leaving Kāverī near his own holy tank and guarded by his disciples, Kāverī sank into the tank and flowed forth from it as a river. To hide from Agastya's disciples, she went underground and appeared again at Bhaganda Kṣetra (Bhagamaṇḍala), and then flowed on towards Valampuri/Valamburi. When Agastya realized what had happened, he ran after Kāverī, asked her forgiveness and begged her to return and to stay with him. Though she was not willing to do so, she did not want Agastya to grieve. Thus she divided herself, one half flowing off as a river, the other half staying with Agastya. Agastya explained to his river half which road to take to the eastern sea and he enumerated all the holy places along the new stream.

Rice also tells other stories referring to the region where the Kāverī has its beginnings. Herein also the story of Sujyoti—the underground river—appears. Her role is important since she joins Kāverī and Kānakā to form a confluence (*saṃgama*). Rice also explains the region's three different names which are Brahmakṣetra, Matsyadeśa and Kroḍadeśa. The first name is connected with the story of Brahmā's meditation on Viṣṇu in the Sahyādri mountain in the Western Ghats, and with Brahmā's worship of Viṣṇu with water from the river Virajā. For this reason, the country is known as Brahmakṣetra. The name Matsyadeśa connects the place with the holy spring in which Viṣṇu appeared as a fish (*matsya*) worshipping Śiva. The third name Kroḍadeśa is connected with the great king and ascetic Candravarman.

Brahmanas the honours and gifts due to them, have met with singularly bad success. The Coorgs, it would appear, never troubled themselves much about the contents and admonitions of the Kāveri book, and though the translation of it was designed to make it accessible to them, it is so highly spiced with Sanskrit and old Canarese expressions, that few even understand it" (Rice 1878, 86).

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When he was worshipping Pārvatī, she promised him that she would appear in his country as Kāverī. Since his offspring, being descendants of a Kṣatriya and his Śūdra wife, similarly to Varāha, also called Kroḍa, had strength and strong nails, their land was called Kroḍadeśa and they themselves were called Kroḍas. With time the name changed into Koḍagu/Kodavu, which is the name of the Coorg people. When Pārvatī appeared as Kāverī in Valamburi, Coorg people were bathing in its waters. The strong stream of the river twisted the knots of the women's clothes around their backs and till today this fashion is characteristic of the Coorg women. Then Pārvatī herself appeared in the water and told the Coorgs to find a proper priest at the source of the Kāverī. The Coorgs met the priest there and stayed with him for a month during which he taught them how to perform rites. From that time onwards, they gather every year and celebrate this event in the month called Tulā (October–November). Thus, the text of the *māhātmya* also serves as a tool for establishing the Coorgs' tradition, strengthening their identity.[33]

After this relatively early report *Mysore and Coorg* by Rice, the region of the Kāverī's source later attracted other scholars, and there is at least one more work on the Coorgs, also bringing the details concerning *Kāverī Māhātmyas*, which is worth mentioning here. This is M. N. Srinivas's *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1965). Supplied with a foreword by the distinguished social anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whom Srinivas consulted while in Oxford, this book coins the term "Sanskritization"[34] as a strategy of lower castes' social upward mobility. Especially in chapter 7 of his important work, entitled "Hinduism" (Srinivas 1965, 213–228), Srinivas refers extensively to the role of Kāverī in the local culture of the Coorgs and the river's role in the Sanskritization process.[35] He also draws attention to the detail that the all-Indian worship of Gaṅgā facilitates the

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33 However, in Rice's opinion, the above-mentioned passage was primarily a tool to subjugate the Kodavas to the Brahmins. One finds in this passage these and some other more elaborate traditional stories about the connection of the Coorg region with Kāverī. The story of the Kāverī is also connected with the story of Sujyoti, given by Viṣṇu as a daughter to the Brahmin Suyajña and then becoming a wife of Devendra. Since she wanted to become a river, she, with her husband's servant Kānakā, became two streams. She promised to come back when Kāverī would appear and to join her on her way towards the sea. The text tells also, in the form of the account by the *ṛṣi* Dalbhya to the king Dharmavarman, of the description of the country where Kāverī has its beginnings. Here the three names, Brahmakṣetra, Matsyadeśa and Kroḍadeśa, appear together with their explanations. In the explanation of the name Kroḍadeśa the story of Pārvatī appearing in the Kāverī waters as well as the beginnings of its close connection with the Coorg people is presented.

34 Srinivas prefers "Sanskritization" to "Brahmanization," because the rites he refers to are not limited to only Brahmins, but are also applied to the other two higher, twice-born *varṇas*.

35 Among other aspects, Srinivas shows how this process works in practice by taking examples of Vedic *kṣatrapāla*, who became Ketrappa, a popular god of the Coorgs and while the same time a local cobra-deity was identified with Subrahmaṇya, a son of Śiva (Srinivas 1965, 215).

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absorption of the worship of the local rivers and mentions the Kāverī as an example for this strategy.[36]

The model for the Kāverī myth, as Srinivas calls it, is the Gaṅgā myth. The Gaṅgā in Allahabad joins two other rivers, namely the Yamunā and the mythologically added Sarasvatī, forming the so-called *triveṇi saṃgama*. In a similar way, the Kāverī joins the Kānakā and the mythological underground river Sujyoti in Bhāgamaṇḍala. Some natural phenomena of the region of Tāla Kāveri are also included to develop local mythology along the all-Indian paths, for example the so-called Bhīma's pebble which is a big boulder associated with one of the Pāṇḍavas.[37] According to Srinivas, this made the *Mahābhārata* story more familiar and connected with the Coorgs and to other inhabitants of the region. Through identification of the river with the goddess Pārvatī, the Kāverī is worshipped by the Coorgs as their patron goddess.[38]

Though the text in a mixture of Sanskrit and literary Kannada language was not very popular among the Coorgs, the *Kāveri Māhātmya* nevertheless became a kind of a popular folksong in later times, important from the point of view of the Coorgs'

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36 The river is worshipped along its stream, and many holy spots were established, especially in the places in which other rivers join the Kāverī, as well as on the islands formed by the river. Bathing in the river, especially on particular dates, removes sins and brings good, even emancipation. There is also a belief that there exists an underground passage connecting the source of the Kāverī with the Gaṅgā in Benares. Pilgrims, similarly as those in Benares, take water from the Tāla Kāverī to their homes to use it for purification and drinking on particular days; with this water members of the Coorgs' *okka* (patrilineal joint family) are sprinkled.

37 The story connects this boulder with a small pebble which Bhīma found in his food and threw it away: what was small to him is very big for ordinary human beings.

38 This association of the river with the Coorgs is also found in the following story, which has been referred to above: Pārvatī as the Kāverī appeared for the first time in Coorg, and the pleats of the saris of the bathing Coorg women were pushed back by the flood of its water, thus it is the way Coorg women are wearing their clothes. The Kāverī myth made the Coorgs, due to the fact that they were the offspring of a Kṣatriya and his Śūdra wife, to be Ugras. This fact explains their mode of life, physical strength and warrior character. While considering this fact, Srinivas suspects that the Brahmanical authors of the myth could not accept some features of the Coorgs' life-style, especially their dietary habits and neglecting Vedic rites on some occasions. This, Srinivasan thinks, is the reason they were not labelled Kṣatriyas but Ugras. In modern times however especially educated Coorgs claim to be Kṣatriyas and also descendants of Indo-Aryans.

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identity.[39] Thus, the role of the river itself, but also its myth expounded in the *māhātmya* is noteworthy, not only from the religious point of view, but also from a socio-anthropological perspective.[40]

The *māhātmyas* connected with the river are also mentioned by Indira Viswanathan Peterson in the chapter of the above-mentioned work *Eternal Kaveri* entitled *The Kaveri in Legend and Literature* (Peterson 1999, 35–48). She refers to the *māhātmya* of the Tāla Kāverī in Koḍagu region, where the story tells about the sage Kavera performing a penance to propitiate Brahmā. Brahmā gave him Lopāmudrā, Viṣṇu's *māyā* (Viṣṇu's power) incarnated as a daughter by name Viṣṇumāyā. Lopāmudrā appeared in the form of the Kāverī river who was married to the sage Agastya. The sage kept her in the pot, but one day a crow tipped over the pot and caused the river to stream out. When she was passing by Viṣṇu, he manifested as a gooseberry tree at the site of the Kāverī's source.

Yet another *māhātmya* that Petersen mentioned is the *Kantapurāṇa*, referring to Sirkali. It tells of Śiva who gave the Kāverī to Agastya in order to serve him for ablutions. Agastya took the river in the pot to the south, where Indra was hiding from the demon Surapadman in Śiva's garden in Sirkali, taking a form of a bamboo. Since the garden was afflicted by drought caused by the demon, Indra asked Gaṇeśa to bring the Kāverī to Sirkali. Gaṇeśa took the form of a crow and overturned Agastya's pot. The Kāverī poured out from it into the Sirkali garden.[41]

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39 Srinivas 1965, 221. In the appendix entitled "The Kāveri Myth" (1965, 244–247) Srinivas presents the content of the Myth, and says that: "In 1864, the Kāvēri Myth, called *Kéveri Māhātmya* or "the greatness of Kāvēri," was translated into Kannaḍa from the original Sanskrit by one Srinivāsa Iyengār at the instance of an influential Coorg official, Nanjappa, of the Biddanḍa *okka*. The Myth has also been translated into Kodagi, presumably from the Kannada translation of the Sanskrit original." He also says that the *māhātmya* can be found in the *Skāndapurāṇa*.

40 In the concluding passage of the appendix Srinivas writes: "The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* brings the River Kāvēri and its worship into the main stream of the purāṇas which have an all-India spread. It also makes Sanskritic deities and ideas familiar to the inhabitants of Coorg. A special and intimate relation is established between Coorg, Coorgs, and the river as a result of it. A distinctive feature of the dress of Coorg women is associated with the Kāvēri. Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their patron goddess. At least once in ten girls is named Kāvēri. The account of the origin of Coorgs in the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is an attempt to reconcile certain facts which are not easy to reconcile. While it is true that Coorgs are a wealthy and powerful group with a martial outlook, they do not perform certain Vedic rituals which are performed by Kshatriyas elsewhere in India, and their dietary included domestic pork and liquor. The myth finds a way out of the difficulties by suggesting that they are Ugras, the descendants of a Kshatriya father and Shūdra mother" (Srinivas 1965, 247).

41 This myth brings together the most important gods of the pan-Indian pantheon, the most important South Indian river and the figure of Agastya, who is one of the most important personages for the Tamil identity, at the same time belonging to pan-Indian and orthodox lore. There are also Tamilian stories crediting the Cōḻa king as the one who makes the Kāverī flow eastward.

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Apart from the above-mentioned texts, there exist some other *Kāverī Māhātmyas*, among them *Tulākāverimāhātmiyam* (sic), which is available to us in Sanskrit in Devanāgarī script, claiming that it belongs to the *Āgneyapurāṇa*. It is a text in thirty-one chapters. For our purpose, chapter 14 (*tulākāverisnānavidhiprakāraḥ nāma caturdaśo 'dhyāyaḥ*) and especially the chapters from 23 onwards seem to be most interesting, recalling the story of the beginning of the river and its connection with Agastya.[42]

To Conclude

In our contribution we tried to evaluate the role of water bodies and to trace strategies of referring to them, and using them in several religious texts. Thereby, we wanted to present the dynamics between natural phenomena and the life of the inhabitants of the Kāverī region as seen in the *māhātmya* genre, which we see as especially effective, as it is immediately inscribed in the mythological and religious as well as in the regional and environmental contexts. We are convinced that water was an important and efficacious motif in establishing the position and authority of particular places of worship.

The story of the Kāverī, as seen in the above-mentioned sources, puts her in immediate relation with Brahmā, being the representative of the Brahmanical/orthodox stream of Hindu religions. What is more, she is equated with the ancient *ṛṣiki* Lopāmudrā and Viṣṇu's *māyā*. As Brahmā's foster daughter, she directly becomes an integral part of the orthodox setup. Subsequently, she is connected with one of the most important personages of the south—Agastya. He is a great sage of Vedic times and becomes an implementer of orthodox thoughts. At the same time, being a traditional author of important ancient Tamil texts and of the Tamilian system of medicine, he joined two streams of culture, pan-Indian and South Indian or rather Tamilian. In the mutual exchange, Kāverī receives the orthodox and pan-Indian imprimatur and also Agastya enters the realm of the regional culture. This kind of agency we can observe in the case of *māhātmya* literature, which was one of the means and instruments of the processes called localization, Brahmanization, Sanskritization or acculturation—implementing of the pan-Indian, orthodox elements into local lore, but also adjusting the pan-Indian to the local culture and also assimilating/appropriating local elements.[43]

Petersen mentions also the Kodagu Kāverī myths which we have already referred to. As for the Tamil region, the river takes name of Ponni – Golden One, since it carries yellow silt making the earth along its stream very fertile (Petersen 1999, 35–48).

42 Some passages of this text are included in the appendix.

43 For the discussion concerning the notions of locality, Sanskritization, deshification, "spatial turn" in the context of *tīrthas* one can consult, for example, Lazzaretti 2016.

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Moreover, the *māhātmya* literature in general and the *māhātmyas* which are in the scope of our interest highlight the relationship between culture and natural phenomena. The splendid reservoir of water that the Kāverī constitutes was practically utilized already by the early rulers of the region eager to create an irrigation system for their land. It was also an ideal element for a religious system, as it facilitated that the local river could be perceived as integral part of the overall system of the pan-Indian religion and as a goddess incarnated, equated with the holy water of the Gaṅgā and even, as we see from the *māhātmyas*, exceeding and superior to the Gaṅgā.

The richness of the natural landscape enabled the development of many mythological stories exploiting particular features of the nature to create stories interwoven into the rich fabric of Indian mythology. Many holy spots along the river were included in a kind of religious pilgrimage net and program, encouraging and enabling devotees to visit not only one, but many holy *kṣetras* along the Kāverī. Such an idea seems, for example, to lie behind the concept of the *pañcaraṅga* Vaiṣṇava shrines. By using the presence of the natural phenomena of several islands on the river and *tīrthas* along its stream, the religious reality of the region was enriched by such concepts. The natural phenomena were closely observed and even the meandering of the river was utilized to claim the special sacredness of some places. For example, this is the case of the Śrī Raṅganātha Perumāḷ temple in Vadarengam/Vata Rangam near Sirkali, which belongs to the *pañcaraṅga* shrines, when the Kāverī branch, the Koḷḷiṭam, takes the direction from south to north. This is perceived as especially sacred. It thus establishes the ideal spot for building a temple there. Therefore, many natural phenomena create the frame of the cultural production of the region. Interconnectedness of the natural phenomena, so spectacularly observed on the example of the river and the places along its stream, is then reproduced in culture, which addresses and exploits the opportunity of creating a net of culturally productive places, shrines and temples. This interconnectedness of different phenomena is then observed in the literary works addressing the issues of connected places along the connecting river. This concept is crucial for the cultural ecology approach to culture and literature and becomes a fruitful method of looking into the culturally productive interactions between humans and nature.

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Appendix

Excerpts from the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* and the *Tulākāverimāhātmiyam*

The passage from chapter 9 of the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya*[44] presents the way the text addresses and describes the question of the superiority of the Kāverī referring to the competition between two holy rivers, Gaṅgā and Kāverī.

Śrīraṅgamāhātmya 9.19cd–38:

अयं मनोहरो देशः परितस्सह्यकन्यया ॥ ९:१९ ॥
चन्द्रपुष्करिणीचेयं पावनी श्रमनाशिनी ।
अयं च भक्तिमान्राजा धर्मवर्मा सदा मयि ॥ ९:२० ॥
इमे च मुनयः सर्वे वसन्त्यत्र विकल्मषाः ।
अत्रैव वस्तुमिच्छामि लङ्कां गच्छ विभीषण ॥ ९:२१ ॥
पुरावृत्तमिदञ्चात्र श्रोतुमर्हसि राक्षस ।
विन्ध्यपादे महानद्यस्सर्वास्सम्मुदिताः पुरा ॥ ९:२२ ॥
तत्र गन्धर्व आयातो विश्वावसुरिति श्रुतः ।
सप्रणामाञ्जलिं कृत्वा दक्षिणां दिशमास्थितः ॥ ९:२३ ॥
ततो विवादस्संभूतो नदीनां तत्र राक्षस ।
मम प्रणाममकरोन्ममायमिति वै मिथः ॥ ९:२४ ॥
समुद्रं दक्षिणं गत्वा सगन्धर्वपतिः प्रभो ।

[44] Forthcoming critical edition by R. Sathyanarayanan and M. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz.

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प्राबोधयत्पद्मनाभं नभस्ये मासि संयतः ॥ ९:२५ ॥
अयने तूत्तरे प्राप्ते निवृत्तश्चोत्तरां दिशम् ।
॥ गङ्गाकावेर्योः परस्परमाधिक्यविवादः ॥
पुनः प्रणाममकरोन्नदीनां तत्र गायकः ॥ ९:२६ ॥
त्वया नमस्कृतं कस्या इत्युक्तो याधिकात्र वः ।
तस्यै कृतप्रणामोहमित्युक्त्वा प्रययौ हि सः ॥ ९:२७ ॥
आधिक्यं प्रति सर्वासां तासां वादो महानभूत् ।
नाहमित्येव वै नद्यस्तत्क्षणेन विशश्रमुः ॥ ९:२८ ॥
गङ्गायाश्चैव कावेर्या न विश्रान्तिस्तदाऽभवत् ।
वादश्च सुमहानासीदन्योन्याधिक्यकारणात् ॥ ९:२९ ॥
सदनं ब्रह्मणो गत्वाऽपृच्छेतां परमेष्ठिनम् ।
गङ्गाधिका न सन्देह इत्युवाच प्रजापतिः ॥ ९:३० ॥
तच्छ्रुत्वा दुःखिता चेयं कावेरी सह्यपर्वते ।
तपसा तोषयामास ब्रह्माणं राक्षसेश्वर ॥ ९:३१ ॥
गङ्गाधिक्यमभीप्सन्ती चिरङ्कालं सरिद्वरा ।
तस्यै वरन्ददौ ब्रह्मा गङ्गासाम्यं महामुने ॥ ९:३२ ॥
आधिक्यं च मया दातुं न शक्यन्तेऽथ सोब्रवीत् ।
॥ श्रीरङ्गानुग्रहात्कावेर्या गङ्गापेक्षयाधिक्यम् ॥
सारक्षेत्रे तु कावेर्यां संस्थाप्य प्रतिमां मम ॥ ९:३३ ॥
चिरमाराधयामास वरो दत्तस्तदा मया ।
सा स्तुत्वा प्रणिपत्याह कावेरी मां सरिद्वरा ॥ ९:३४ ॥
कावेरी उवाच—
देव त्वदङ्घ्रिसंवन्धाद्गङ्गा मत्तोऽतिरिच्यते ।
गङ्गासाम्यं मया लब्धमाधिक्यं न कदाचन ॥ ९:३५ ॥
रुद्रोवाच—
तस्यै वरमदात्तत्र कावेर्यै कमलेक्षणः ।
श्री भगवानुवाच—
मत्संवन्धोद्भवं तस्या माहात्म्यं केन साध्यते ॥ ९:३६ ॥
तथापि मत्प्रसादेन गङ्गायाह्यधिका भव ।

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मत्संबन्धाय ते देवी त्वन्मध्ये धाममामकम् ॥ ९:३७ ॥
आगमिष्यति रङ्गाख्यं तत्र नित्यं वसाम्यहम् ।
गङ्गायाश्चाधिका भूयो नित्ययोगान्मया सह ॥ ९:३८ ॥

Translation:

Śrībhagavān said:

19cd. This is a charming place surrounded by the daughter of Sahya [=Kāverī].

20. This [pond] Candrapuṣkariṇī is holy and removes fatigue as well. This king Dharmavarman is also always devoted to me.

21. These sinless seers are [also] residing here. [So,] I would like to live here myself. Go to Laṅkā, o Vibhīṣaṇa!

22. O *rākṣasa*! You deserve to listen the past history of this place. In olden days, all great rivers were assembled at the foot of the Vindhya hills.

23. There came, with folded hands, a *gandharva* known as Viśvāvasu, who lived in the southern direction.

24. Then there started a discussion among the rivers, o *rākṣasa*. "He saluted me", "[He saluted] me"—[they quarrel] with each other.

25. Having gone to the southern ocean, the lord of the *gandharvas* with self-control woke up Padmanābha in the month of *nabhas* (*śrāvaṇa*?), o lord.

26. When the sun reached the north, he reached the northern land.

The discussion/quarrel of Gaṅgā and Kāverī about their mutual superiority
Again/then the singer (*gandharva*) saluted the rivers.

27. "Whom are you saluting?"—[he was] asked. "I have saluted the one who is superior out of you two"—having said that he went away.

28. There was a great discussion about the superiority among all [rivers]. The rivers immediately withdrew [saying]: "Certainly I am not".

29. [But] there was no cessation of [discussion] between the Gaṅgā and the Kāverī, [and their] great discussion was for a mutual [claim] of superiority.

30. Having gone to Brahmā's abode [they both] asked the highest Lord. "There is no doubt that the Gaṅgā is superior," said Prajāpati.

31 Having heard that, the unhappy Kāverī on the Sahya mountain satisfied Brahmā by [her] penance, o lord of *rākṣasas*.

32. The best among rivers (Kāverī) was desiring the superiority over the Gaṅgā for a long time. Brahmā gave her the boon [which is] the equality with the Gaṅgā, o great sage.

33–34. He said: "I cannot give [you] superiority." Having installed my image on the Kāverī, in the place of *sāra* [Kumbhakonam?], she worshipped [me] for a long time. Then I gave her a boon. This Kāverī, best of the rivers, having praised me, bowed to me respectfully, and said:

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Kāverī said:

35. "O Lord, due to the attachment to your feet the Gaṅgā excels me. I have obtained equality with the Gaṅgā, [but] never superiority."

Rudra said:

36. Lotus-eyed (Kamalekṣaṇa) gave the boon to that Kāverī there.

Śrībhagavān said:

"Her greatness is due to the attachment to me, by whom [else] can [such] greatness be achieved?

37–38. Therefore, by my grace be superior to Gaṅgā. O Devī, for the benefit of my connection, I will come to my abode called Raṅga in the midst of yours and reside over there always. Due to the eternal connection with me you are superior to the Gaṅgā again."

The passage from chapter 10 of the *Śrīraṅgamāhātmya* refers to the nine holy ponds that establish the net of water reservoirs encircling the Raṅganātha temple.

Śrīraṅgamāhātmya 10.46–54:

सर्वत्रैव च कावेर्यां श्रीरङ्गे च विशेषतः ।
स्नानकाले जपेन्मन्त्रं सामशाखा सु चोदितम् ॥ १०:४६ ॥
यद्यत्तीव्रं दुष्कृतं यच्च किञ्चिच्छारीरं वा मानसं वाचिकं वा ।
सद्यः पुनीहि पयसामृतेन कवेरकन्ये मम कर्म यच्च ॥ १०:४७ ॥
नारायणीयशाखायां उक्तोऽयं वेधसा स्वयम् ।
प्रशंसा सह्यकन्यायाः पुंसां पापापनुत्तये ॥ १०:४८ ॥
अष्टतीर्थसमोपेतां अष्टवृक्षोपशोभिताम् ।
जुष्टां च विष्णुना पुण्यां चन्द्रपुष्करिणीं शुभाम् ॥ १०:४९ ॥
दृष्ट्वा स्पृष्ट्वा तथा स्नात्वा प्रीत्या संप्रोक्ष्य वा पुनः ।
कीर्तयित्वा तथा श्रुत्वा मुच्यते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ॥ १०:५० ॥
अन्यत्रापि प्रदेशेषु यत्र कुत्र जलाशये ।
चन्द्रपुष्करिणीत्युक्त्वा स्नात्वा तस्यार्थभाग्भवेत् ॥ १०:५१ ॥
एतानि नवतीर्थानि एकाहेन प्रदक्षिणम् ।
स्नात्वाप्रणम्य रङ्गेशं पुनाति दशपूरुषम् ॥ १०:५२ ॥
एकादश्यामुपोष्यैव द्वादश्यां स्नानमाचरेत् ।
तारयेदात्मनो वंश्यान् सप्तसप्त च सप्त च ॥ १०:५३ ॥
एतेषु पिण्डदानञ्च गयाश्राद्धेन सम्मितम् ।

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॥ श्रीरङ्गमाहात्म्यफलश्रुतिः ॥

अपिगोग्रासमात्रेण मोदन्ते पितरो दिवि ॥ १०:५४ ॥

Translation:

46. Everywhere in the Kāverī, especially in Srīraṅgam, at bathing one should recite the *mantra* well directed in the *Sāmaśākhā*.
47. Whatever violent bad deeds [I have committed] either bodily, mentaly or orally, immediately you should purify whatever may be my *karma* by the nectar [in the form of] water, o daughter of Kavera.
48. In the branch of Nārāyāṇa (*nārāyaṇīyaśākhāyāṃ*), Brahmā himself uttered this, [and] the praise of the daughter of Sahya (Kāverī) for the removal of the sins of people.
49–50. [One will be] released from all sins by praising and by hearing [the glory of Candrapuṣkariṇī], after having seen, touched, bathed, or again by sprinkling the holy beloved of Viṣṇu and the auspicious Candrapuṣkariṇī, [which is] endowed with eight [sacred] waters/ponds [and] adorned with eight [sacred] trees.
51. Even in other places, wherever in the water bodies, having uttered "Candrapuṣkariṇī" [and] having bathed, one will be sharing his merits.
52. These nine *tīrthas* purify up to the tenth generation if someone [visits,] circumambulates and takes a bath on one day and prostrates to the lord of Raṅga.
53. Who fasts on *ekādaśī*, [and] who undertakes the bath on *dvādaśī*, he rescues his own family members of seven plus seven plus seven [generations].
54. [In all these nine places] the gift of *piṇḍa* is equal to [performing] *śrāddha* in Gayā.

The passage of the *Tulākāverīmāhātmyam* refers to the mythical origin of Kāverī, identifies the river with Viṣṇumāyā and connects its appearance in the South with the sage Agastya, known for his specific role in the process of implementing Brahmanical culture in the South India.

Tulākāverimāhātmiyam Chapter 23 (pp. 105–107)

हरिश्चन्द्रंप्रति अगस्त्येन कावेर्युत्पत्तिकथनम्

दाल्भ्यः :—

इति धर्मान् शुभान् श्रुत्वा पावनान् कुंभजोदितान् ।

हरिश्चंद्रो प्रहृष्टात्मा पुनः पप्रच्छ सादरम् ॥ १ ॥

हरिश्चन्द्रः :—

भगवन् योगिनां श्रेष्ठ कुंभयोने महामते ।

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कृतकृत्याहम् एवाद्य त्वत्पदांभोजसेवनात् ॥ २ ॥
नमस्ते योगिवर्याय नमस्तुभ्यं त्रिमूर्तये ।
नमस्ते मुनिवर्याय नमस्ते दीनबंधवे ॥ ३ ॥
सर्वे धर्माश् श्रुताः पुण्या भुक्तिमुक्तिफलप्रदाः ।
विशेषेण समाश्रौषं कावेर्या दिव्यवैभवम् ॥ ४ ॥
सत्यं प्रसन्नो भगवान् मुकुंदो ममेह विष्णुस् सनकादिवंध्यः ।
नो चेन् मम स्याद् इति साधुसंगोक्तिप्रदो यज्ञजपोपलभ्यः ॥ ५ ॥
कावेरीविभवं श्रुत्वा न तृप्तिर् जायते मम ।
अतः पुनस् त्वां पृच्छामि तद्भवान् क्षंतुम् अर्हसि ॥ ६ ॥
कावेरी सह्यसंभूता लोपामुद्रेति कथम् ।
कदा दक्षिणगङ्गेति विश्रुता लोकपावनी ॥ ७ ॥
कथं सह्याद्रिसंभूता गङ्गाधिक्यं गता पुनः ।
एतत् सर्वं तु विस्तीर्य ब्रूहि मे मुनिपुंगव ॥ ८ ॥
एवं राज्ञा स पृष्टो ऽथ ह्यष्टमूर्त्यांशसंभव ।
मन्दं स्मित्वा प्रशस्त्यैनम् व्याजहार मुनिर् नृपम् ॥ ९ ॥
अगस्त्यः :—
साधु साधु महाराज! त्वम् एव सुकृती भुवि ।
धर्मप्रसंगे यच् छ्रद्धा पुनः पुनर् अभूत् तव ॥ १० ॥
पुण्यश्लोकाग्रणीस् त्वं हि लोकानुग्रहकाम्यया ।
धर्मान् पृच्छसि राजेंद्र संत एव सतां धनम् ॥ ११ ॥
संत एव सतां बंधुस् संत एव सतां तपः ।
संत एव सतां मित्रं संत एव सतां व्रतम् ॥ १२ ॥
तस्माद् ब्रवीमि कावेर्याः प्रभावं पुण्यवर्धनम् ।
इति प्रशस्य तं योगि कावेर्याः पुण्यवैभवम् ॥ १३ ॥
कुम्भयोनिर् महातेजा व्याहर्तुम् उपचक्रमे ।
केशवे द्वारकां यांते धर्मजेन महात्मना ॥ १४ ॥
अस्मिन् अर्थे पुरा पृष्टो दौम्यनाम महामुनिः ।
कावेरी संभवं सर्वं धर्मपुत्राय सो'ब्रवीत् ॥ १५ ॥
दौम्यः :—

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कवेरो नाम राजेंद्र! राजर्षीर् अमितप्रभः ।
योगिवर्यः प्रसन्नात्मा सर्वविद्या विशारदः ॥ १६ ॥
जितेंद्रियो जिताहारो निस्संगो निष्परिग्रहः ।
विरक्तस् सर्वधर्मेषु किंचित्कालं तु कर्मठः ॥ १७ ॥
मुमुक्षुर् अभवच् छ्रीमान् कर्मकृत्वा सुदुष्करम् ।
हिमवत्पर्वते रमिए तपस् तेपे सुदारुणम् ॥ १८ ॥
कावेरी योगिनस् तस्य तप्यतस् तप उत्तमम् ।
दिव्यवर्षसहस्रांते ब्रह्मागम्यतम् अब्रवीत् ॥ १९ ॥
ब्रह्मा :—
वरं वृणीष्व राजेंद्र! वरदो 'हम् इहागतः ।
राजा तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा कृतांजलिर् अभाषत ॥ २० ॥
कवेरः :—
प्रसन्नो यदि मे देव तपसो 'स्ति फलं यदि ।
भवता मुक्तिम् आकांक्षे किम् अन्यैर् नश्वरैः फलैः ॥ २१ ॥
ब्रह्मा :—
न वयम् मोक्षदाने तु समर्थास् सकलास् सुराः ।
स एव मुक्तिदस् सत्यं परं ब्रह्माच्युतस् स्वयम् ॥ २२ ॥
मम कन्या जगन्माता विष्णुमाया महामुने ।
त्वत्पुत्रीत्वं गता देवी तव मोक्षम् प्रदास्यति ॥ २३ ॥
इत्युक्त्वा सो स्मरन् मायां विष्णोर् लोकविमोहिनीम् ।
उपतस्थे विशालाक्षी सर्वाभरणभूषिता ॥ २४ ॥
सा कन्या चिन्तमयी सृष्टा देवगंधर्वसंस्तुता ।
पितामहस् ताम् अलोक्य वाक्यम् एतद् उवाच ह ॥ २५ ॥
भद्रे अस्य योगिनो देवी कन्यात्वं गच्छ मुक्तिदा ।
निदीमूल्वाथ कावेरी मोक्षमार्गैकसाधनी ॥ २६ ॥
सर्वतीर्थमयी पुण्या लोकांस् त्वं पालयिष्यसि ।
लोपामुद्राख्ययादापि त्वम् एकांशेन शोभने ॥ २७ ॥
भव भार्याप्य् अगस्त्यस्य योगींद्रमहात्मनः ।
इत्य् उक्त्वान्तर्दधे ब्रह्मा हंसारूढो ऽमरैस् सह ॥ २८ ॥

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गते ब्रह्मणि साशक्तिर् विष्णो भगवतो हरेः ।
कमनीयाकृतिः कन्या कवेरस्य मुनेर् अभूत् ॥ २९॥

Translation:

The story of the birth of the Kāverī [told] by Agastya to Hariścandra

Dālbhya:

1. Thus, having heard to the auspicious, holy rules (*dharmas*) told by the one born in the *kumbha* vessel [i.e,. Agastya], Hariścandra, being satisfied, again asked with respect.

Hariścandra:

2. O lord, best among *yogins*, having the *kumbha* as a womb (Kumbhayoni), o great-minded, I am contented today due to the service at your lotus feet.
3. Salutation to you, O best of *yogins*, salutation to you of three forms, salutation to you, o great seer, salutation to you, kin of miserable ones.
4. All virtues (*dharmas*) have been heard, which yield the fruits of [worldly] enjoyments and emancipation. I heard especially about the divine greatness/ appearence of the Kāverī.
5. Truly my gracious Lord Mukunda, here my Viṣṇu is praised/saluted by Sanaka and others, if he is not, he who is claimed by the words of the group of *sādhus*, [and he who is] obtained by the recitation and sacrifices, will not be mine.
6. Having heard the greatness of the Kāverī, satisfaction is not born in me. Therefore I am asking you again about her birth/existence, pardon me/excuse me/you deserve to excuse me.
7. Kāverī born from Sahya [mountains], how does she become Lopāmudrā? When she is celebrated as the Southern Gaṅgā, purifying the world?
8. How did [she who] originated from the Sahya mountain then [obtain] her superiority over the Gaṅgā? All this tell me elaboratelly, o eminent *muni*.
9. In this way asked by the king he, the progeny of Aṣṭamūrti (Śiva), this *muni*, smiling slightly, praising the king said.

Agastya:

10. Well done O Great King! You alone are virtous on the earth. Adherence towards *dharma* happened again and again to you.
11. O Indra among kings! You are indeed the foremost among good people, you ask about dharma of people, good people alone are the wealth of good people.
12. Good people alone are the kinsman of good people; good people alone are the penance for good people; good people alone are the friend of good people; good people alone are the holy practice of good people.

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13–14b. Therefore, I am telling about the greatness of the Kāverī, which increases merits. Having praised the great virtues of the Kāverī, the one who was born from the *kumbha*, the mighty one began to talk to him.

14c–15. When the great Keśava went to Dvāraka, by the great soul Dharmarāja (Yudhiṣṭhira) earlier the great muni named Daumya was asked in this matter. [He] told the complete [story of the] appearance of the Kāverī to Dharmaputra.

Daumya:

16. O Lord (king of kings)! There was a *ṛṣi* of royal descent named Kavera, the one of immeasurable power, an eminent *yogin*, of pleased self, fluent in all knowledges.

17–18. [He] of conquered senses and controlled desire for food, free from bondages, with no property/family, the clever having no interest of all *dharmas* for some time, the venerated one desiring emancipation, having executed deeds difficult to be done, undertook a severe penance on the beautiful mountain Himavat.

19. At the end of thousands of divine years Brahmā came and said to the *yogin* Kavera, who was practising the highest penance,

Brahmā:

20. Choose the boon, o king of kings, I, the giver of boon came [here]. The king having heard these words, with his folded hands said:

Kavera:

21. If you are favourable to me, if there is a fruit of [my] penance, I desire emancipation [as a fruit] from you, what [is the point of] other impermanent fruits?

Brahmā:

22. We all gods are not capable of bestowing emancipation. He the supreme truth and *brahman*, Acyuta indeed is granting emancipation.

23. O great *muni*, my daughter, mother of the world, Viṣṇumāyā, the goddess, becomes your offspring [and] will grant emancipation to you.

24. Having said thus, he remembered Māyā of Viṣṇu as infatuating living beings. The large-eyed, adorned with all embellishments appeared [there].

25. She was created as a daughter, consisting of consciousness, praised by gods and Gandharvas. Having seen her, Pitāmaha spoke these words:

26. O beautiful girl! you who bestow emancipation, become a daughter of this *yogin*, go and become a river, Kāverī, the one leading the way towards emancipation.

27–28. Having [the nature of] all *tīrthas*, holy one, you will protect people. Taking the name Lopāmudra even now, with one part, o beautiful, be also the wife of Agastya, the great one and the best of *yogins*. Having said thus, Brahmā disappeared, mounting the goose along with eternal ones.

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29. When Brahmā disappeared, this *śakti* of Lord Viṣṇu, Hari, became the beautifully-shaped daughter of the sage Kavera.

In the following we present some chosen references to the Kāverī river from Sanskrit sources, which speak about its position in Indian culture by introducing the river into the pan-Indian context.
We also add some passages from Tamil sources exemplifying the role and popularity of the Kāverī motif in different kinds of texts throughout the centuries.

Some references to the Kāverī in Sanskrit literature:

Ajitāgama 84.7c—8b

काश्मीरः कौसलः काञ्चीकावेरीकोङ्कणोद्भवाः ॥ ८४:७ ॥

कालिङ्गः कामरूपश्च काशीदेशसमुद्भवः ।

[The rivers] originating in Kāśmīra, Kausala, Kāñcī, Kāverī, Koṅkaṇa, Kaliṅga, and Kāmarūpa are [similar to the river] sprung up/arisen from the country/land of Kāśī.

Makuṭāgama 4.232

गङ्गाञ्च यमुनाञ्चैव नर्मदाञ्च सरस्वतीम् ।

सिन्धुङ्गोदावरीञ्चैव कावेरीन्तीर्थसप्तकम् ॥ ४:२३२ ॥

One should invoke the seven [sacred] waters such as Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Narmadā, Sarasvatī, Sindhu, Godāvarī and Kāverī.

Niśvāsamukha 3.4

गोदावरी महावर्त्ता शर्करावर्त्तमर्जुनी ।

कावेरी कौशिकी चैव तृतीया च महानदी ॥ ३:४ ॥

Godāvarī, Mahāvartā, Śarkarāvartam, Arjunī, Kāverī, Kauśikī, and the third is Mahānadī.

Mahābhārata, supplementary passages to *Adiparvan* 1.2031.01–03

गोदावर्यां ततः स्नात्वा तामतीत्य महाबलः

कावेरीं तां समासाद्य संगमे सागरस्य ह

स्नात्वा संपूज्य देवांश्च पितॄंश्च ऋषिभिः सह

After having taken a bath in Godāvarī, having crossed that, the powerful one reached this Kaverī and, after having taken a bath in the confluence of the ocean, he worshipped the gods and ancestors along with the *ṛṣis*.

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Bhāgavatapurāṇa 10.79.13–14

स्कन्दं दृष्ट्वा ययौ रामः श्रीशैलं गिरिशालयम्

द्रविडेषु महापुण्यं दृष्ट्वाद्रिं वेङ्कटं प्रभुः

कामकोष्णीं पुरीं काञ्चीं कावेरीं च सरिद्वराम्

श्रीरङ्गाख्यं महापुण्यं यत्र सन्निहितो हरिः

After having seen Skanda, Rama went to Śrīśaila, which is an abode of the Lord of mountains. The Lord, having seen the virtuous Veṅkaṭa in the region of Draviḍās, and the city of Kāñcī, and the best of the rivers, Kāverī, and a prosperous [city] called Śrīraṅgam, where Hari is residing...

Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa 4.45 (Aruṇagirinātha commentary)

स सैन्यपरिभोगेन गजदानसुगन्धिना ।

कावेरीं सरितां पत्युः शङ्कनीयामिवाकरोत् ॥

By reason of her enjoyment by his army, redolent of [marked by] the sweet scent of elephants' ichor, he made Kāverī [the river] suspectable [an object of suspicion], as it were, to the lord of the rivers [the Ocean].

Daśakumāracarita of Daṇḍin: p.159. (sixth *ucchvāsa*)

शिविषु – कावेरी – दक्षिणतीरस्थदेशविशेषेषु। पट्टने - नगरे...

[Once] in the excellent town [which is] on the southern bank of Kāverī...

Some Tamil Sources on the river Kāverī[45]:

Mentioning and praising the river Kāverī is very old in the Tamil literary tradition. The river Kāverī has been admired starting from the Sangam literature (third century BCE to third century CE) up to modern Tamil literary novels. These are some examples:

தித்தன்
பிண்ட நெல்லின் உறந்தை ஆங்கண்
கழை நிலை பெறாஅக் காவிரி நீத்தம் (*அகநானூறு* 6.4–6)

tittaṉ
piṇṭa nelliṉ uṟantai āṅkaṇ
kaḻainilai peṟāak kāviri nīttam (*Akanāṉūṟu* 6.4–6)

45 We are grateful to Dr. Indira Manuel for providing the examples and translation related to river Kāverī.

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The flooded Kāviri where the poles used for propelling the boat could not be held straight in the city Urantai (Uraiyūr) belonging to the chieftain Tittan, filled with heaps of paddy.

சிறை பறைந்து உறைஇச் செங்குணக்கு ஒழுகும்
அம் தண் காவிரி (அகநானூறு 76.11–12)

ciṟai paṟaintu cṟaiic ceṅkuṇakku oḷukum
amtaṇ kāviri (*Akanāṉūṟu* 76.11–12)

The beautiful cool Kāviri, which flows straight towards the east crossing all barriers and eroding them.

காவிரிப்
பலர் ஆடு பெரும் துறை மருதொடு பிணித்த
ஏந்து கோட்டு யானை (குறு. 258.2–4)

Kāvirip
pala rāṭu peruntuṟai marutoṭu piṇitta
ēntukōṭṭu yāṉai (*Kuṟuntokai* 258.2–4)

This describes the Kāviri, with bathing ghats where many people bathe, by the side of which is a marutu tree to which an elephant with big tusks is tied.

சிறக்க நின் ஆயுள்
மிக்கு வரும் இன்னீர்க் காவிரி
எக்கர் இட்ட மணலினும் பலவே. (புறநானூறு 43.21–23)

ciṟakka niṉ āyuḷ
mikkuvarum iṉṉīrk kāviri
ekkar iṭṭa maṇaliṉum palavē. (*Puṟanāṉūṟu* 43.21–23)

May your life be long and great as the innumerable sand grains of the sand dunes gathered on the banks of the overflowing sweet waters of the Kāviri.

மா மலை முழக்கின் மான் கணம் பனிப்பக்
கால் மயங்கு கதழ் உறை ஆலியொடு சிதறிக்
கரும்பு அமல் கழனிய நாடு வளம் பொழிய
வளம் கெழு சிறப்பின் உலகம் புரைஇச்
செங்குணக்கு ஒழுகும் கலுழி மலிர் நிறைக்
காவிரி அன்றியும் பூவிரி புனலொரு
மூன்றுடன் கூடிய கூடல் அனையை (பதிற்றுப்பத்து 50.1–7)

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māmalai muḻakkiṉ māṉkaṇam paṉippa
kālmayaṅku kataḻuṟai āliyoṭu citaṟik
karumpu amal kaḻaṉiya nāṭuvaḷam poḻiya
vaḷaṅkeḻu ciṟappiṉ ulakam puraiic
ceṅkuṇakku oḻukum kaluḻi malirniṟaik
kāviri aṉṟiyum pūviri puṉaloru
mūṉṟuṭaṉ kūṭiya kūṭal aṉaiyai. (*Patiṟṟuppattu* 50.1–7)

You resemble, not only the Kāviri which flows straight to the east, with full, muddy waters, re-protecting this prosperous word as clouds rumbled in the lofty mountains making the deer herds tremble and rain poured while hailstones fell from the skies mixed with winds making fertile the land with fields full of sugarcane, but also a confluence of three great rivers covered with flowers.

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Two Lizards in Kanchipuram's Varadarāja Temple[1]

Ute Hüsken (South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University)

The Varadarāja temple is the largest Viṣṇu temple in the South Indian temple town of Kanchipuram. It is located at the south-eastern part of the city (figure 1). This temple is visited by hundreds of pilgrims every day, and on special holidays the number of pilgrims increases into the tens of thousands. However, many pilgrims visit this temple not only to have the auspicious sight (*darśana*) of the main deity Varadarāja, but also to see and touch a high relief of the "golden lizards" on the ceiling in the north-eastern corner of the corridor (*prākāra*) around the temple's *sanctum sanctorum* (figure 2).[2] These representations of two house lizards (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) are so widely known that many pilgrims visit the Varadarāja temple mainly to see and touch them. The lizards draw such huge crowds that the temple administration has set up several sign boards in Tamil, Telugu and English, guiding the pilgrims not only to the main deity, but also to the lizards (figure 3). Even though hardly any of the pilgrims today would want to miss these lizards, and many even specifically visit this temple to see and touch them, it is particularly striking that most publications on the Varadarāja temple and its architecture hardly mention them at all.[3]

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2 This *prākāra* is known as *vaiyamāḷikai* (Raman 1975, 44), meaning "the palace [of god Viṣṇu] on this earth."

3 Raman (1975) does not mention the lizards at all, and Varada Tatacarya (1978, 55) only briefly mentions their existence. Nagaswamy (2011) does not mention them either, yet Rao (2008, 106) remarks: "The golden and silver lizards installed here are considered very auspicious and no devotee leaves the premises without touching them. The legend has it that Indra after getting released from the curse of Goddess Sarasvati, got these silver and golden lizards (who were witnesses to the ordeal) made and consecrated them in the Temple."

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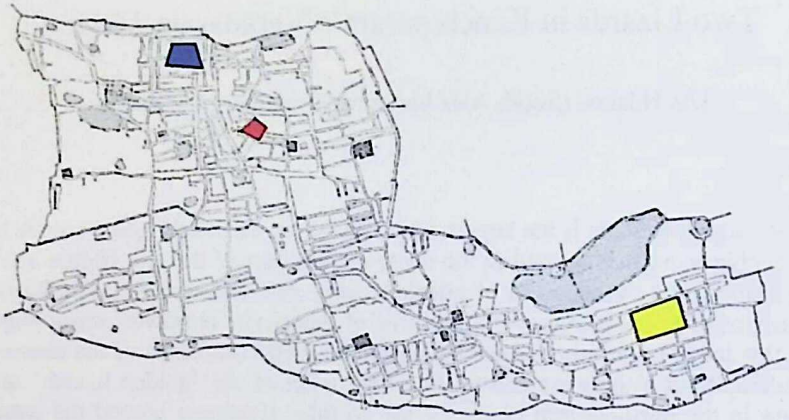

Fig. 1: Map of Kanchipuram with the Varadarāja temple marked in yellow; adapted from Porcher 1985.

Fig. 2: The lizards as they are installed in the Varadarāja temple (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2017).

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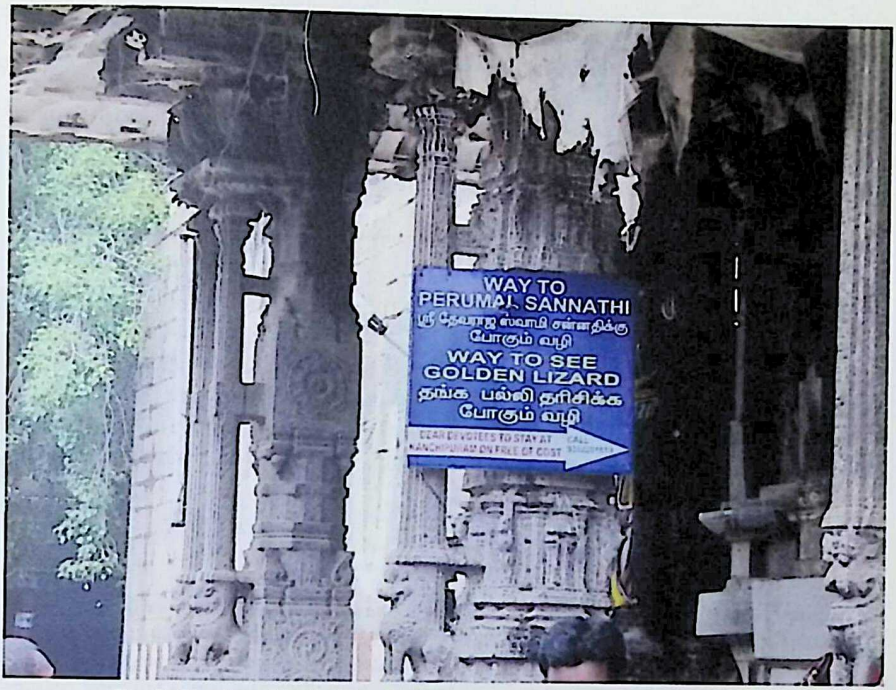

Fig. 3: Sign board in the Varadarāja temple guiding pilgrims to the lizards (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2010)

These two lizards are a ca. fifty to sixty centimeters long brass molding of a lizard, and a ca. fifteen centimeters long silver plaque[4] representing a lizard. Both moldings are—along with copper moldings of the sun and the moon—installed on a ca. five cm thick wooden plank, which is attached to the ceiling in the north-eastern corner of the building at the centre of the Varadarāja temple (figure 4). It is not clear what one would find under this wooden plank, and it is also not known when this plank was installed. We know, however, that the wooden plank with the lizards along with moldings of a sun and a moon must have already been at the temple's ceiling in 1937, when the Tamil text *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam* (TPM, see below) was published, as the current setup is described in the text's foreword.[5] It might be that a high relief

4 The silver lizard-plaque resembles the plaques that are at times offered to deities, when one has experienced the fall of a lizard on one of one's limbs. Thurston (1912, 162) for example reports that "the lizard, associated with the name of Shiva, is regarded as sacred. It is never intentionally killed, and, if accidentally hurt or killed, an image of it in gold or silver is presented by high caste Hindus to a Shiva temple."

5 TPM, pp. 4–5: "In the north-eastern side of this corridor (*prākāra*), there is a pavilion called

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of a lizard on the ceiling has been covered by the current installation, possibly to protect the integrity of a stone lizard underneath, or to highlight this specific lizard, when it had become an attraction to pilgrims in the first half of the twentieth century (for details, see below).[6] Even though only the bigger of the two lizards is made from brass (and thus could be seen as "golden"), both lizards together are generally known as "golden lizards," both in English and in Tamil (*taṅkappalli*).[7]

Lizards in South Indian Temples

In South India, it is quite common to find high reliefs of lizards or other animals on temple walls or ceilings. Branfoot (2000, 207) says that high-relief animals – he mentions birds, monkeys and lizards – on walls and especially on curved eaves of temples and their pavilions are a "common and distinctively Nayaka-period feature of Tamil temple architecture." Lizards, snakes, fish, and sometimes frogs are in fact often found as high reliefs on South Indian temple ceilings, walls, and above temple

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kaccikku vāyttāṉ maṇṭapam. In this area, there are two lizard figures to the north-eastern side, next to the pavilion, made out of gold and mounted on a wooden plank, attached to the ceiling" (*inta prakārattil īcāṉya pākattil kaccikku vāyttāṉ maṇṭapam eṉkiṟa tirumaṇṭapam oṉṟu irukkiṟatu. inta maṇṭapattiṟku aṭutta vaṭa kiḻakku pākattil palli uruvaṅkaḷ iraṇṭu taṅkattāl ceyyappaṭṭu marappalakaiyil cērttu mēlē stāpaṇam ceyyappaṭ ṭirukkiṉṟaṉa*). On page 5, the text TPM adds: "As a sign that this will happen as long as there is sun and moon, the sun and moon are made of gold and are found on the plank. We can see this with our own eyes" (*itu cūrya cantirāḷ uḷḷavaraiyil navaṭapeṟum [read: naṭaipeṟum] eṉpataṟku attākṣiyāka, cūrya cantirāḷaiyum taṅkattāl ceyyappaṭṭu appalakaiyilēyē stāpitam ceyyappaṭṭirukkiṟatai, kaṇ kūṭākap pārkkalām*).

6 Close to the wooden plank there is in fact a small lizard in high relief on the stone ceiling, just to the side of the "silver lizard" (figure 2). Judging from this relief's poor state of conservation, it seems not unlikely that the temple authorities (or those who ran the "lizard *darśana*") at some point decided to add the silver lizard to the plank, as the stone relief suffers from the constant touch of the devotees. Concern over the plank with the lizards' integrity is addressed in a newspaper report from November 28, 2006. On that day, the newspaper *Daily Thanthi* reported that the golden lizard had been damaged in the area of the eyes, which had created tension among the devotees. This report refers to the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*'s version of the lizard narrative (see below), namely that the god Indra provided the lizards with the power to relieve the devotees who touch them form all sins and cure them from all illnesses. The bigger lizard was then replaced by a lizard made of *pañcaloha* (an alloy containing five metals; see *Dinamalar*, December 2, 2007). This *Dinamalar* report also claims that the lizards had been installed "ten years ago" (here, it remains uncertain what time frame this statement refers to).

7 Anna Seastrand, in her online presentation on July 1, 2021 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvslG-Bywkc) refers to a mural of Varadarāja in the Srivaikuntham temple (one of the Navatirupatis) in the far South of Tamil Nadu. Here, a lizard is depicted along with the main deity. At the time of the creation of this mural, the efficacy of the lizard(s) in the Varadarāja temple must already have been known transregionally.

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entrances (figures 5–7).[8] In Hampi,[9] one also finds a high relief motif on pillars, in which a lizard (or a crocodile or iguana?) worships a *liṅga* with a garland (figure 9). This, however, seems to refer to a specific Purāṇic story and needs to be distinguished from other depictions of lizards on walls, ceilings, curved eaves, or on the beam over the temple entrance.[10] In many instances, these high relief sculpted animals are displayed without any further visual context on the temple walls or the ceilings.

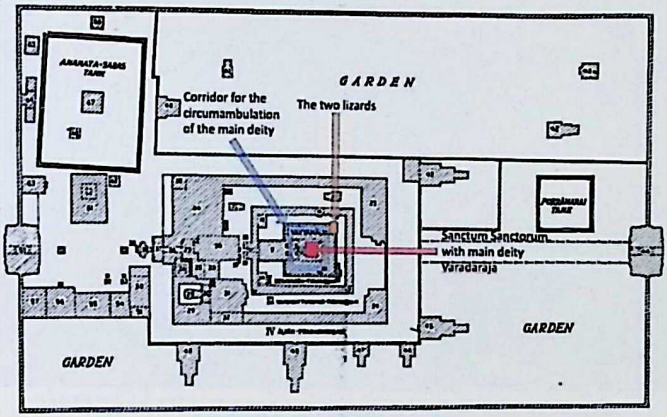

Fig. 4: Ground plan of the Varadarāja temple (adapted from Raman 1975).

8 Yet it seems that for example the high relief aquatic animals on the lower part of temple walls in Hampi (figure 7) might refer to the churning of the milk-ocean, similar to those found in the bas-relief scene of the churning of the milk-ocean at the Southern side of the Angkor Wat temple (figure 8).

9 For example, on a pillar of the Kadelakalu Gaṇeśa shrine, and on a pillar in the Virūpākṣa temple in Hampi.

10 Collins (1976) analyses the motif of a lizard (or an iguana) in high relief, depicted sitting on the beam of door in Angkor. She identifies these lizards as "visual clues referring to the motive of 'witty conceit'", based on her analysis of the scenes. These might, she argues, refer to the *bhikṣāyatanana* legend, and/or the Rāvaṇa-and-Indra legend, and to a narrative motive from the Jātakas. It would be worthwhile investigating whether such lizards are in fact visual clues in South Indian temple architecture, referring to certain mythological themes. This, however, is beyond the scope of my research. It is, however, striking how often one finds these animals on South Indian temple walls or ceilings. Thus far, I have not come across a conclusive explanation of their presence, which goes beyond their "decorative" aspects. However, at least in contemporary South India, house lizards are feared (as poisonous and potential omen), yet their presence in the house is also auspicious (Frembgen 1996). Do these lizards make the temple as house of the deity "complete"? Over temple entrances, two snakes together with a sun or/and a moon represent a solar or lunar eclipse (figure 10). As a crocodile (Skt. *graha*) is a "snatcher" just like the planets, it is certainly possible that the depiction of a reptile (lizard, crocodile, or even a *makara*) is understood as referring to a solar or lunar eclipse (see Guy 2019, 319), as suggested by Pankaja (2020).

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Fig. 5: High relief of a fish, a lizard and a frog at the ceiling of the Dīprakāśa Perumāḷ temple in Kanchipuram (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

Fig. 6: High relief of a fish at the wall near the entrance gate of the Kṛṣṇa temple in Hampi (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

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Fig. 7: Diverse aquatic animals on one of Hampi's temple walls (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

Fig. 8: Fish, crocodiles and other and aquatic animals in the scene depicting the churning of the milk-ocean at Angkor Wat (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2020).

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Fig. 9: High relief on a pillar of a lizard (crocodile?) worshipping a *liṅga* in Hampi (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

The Two Lizards in the Varadarāja Temple

Whatever their significance in other contexts might be, the two lizards in the north-eastern corner of the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* in the Varadarāja temple have come to extraordinary fame, thereby also contributing substantially to the local temple economy. For example, for many visitors to the famous Veṅkaṭeśvara temple in Tirumalai (Andhra Pradesh), the pilgrimage is not complete if they did not visit the golden lizards in Kanchipuram, too. The same holds true for pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh to the Ayyappan shrine in Sabarimala in Kerala. In general, even if people do not come specifically to touch the lizards, most people would not miss the chance to do this once they are in the Varadarāja temple. One important reason for this practice is that touching these lizards is understood to remove the negative effects of a house lizard falling from the ceiling or wall and touching the body of a person (more on this below).

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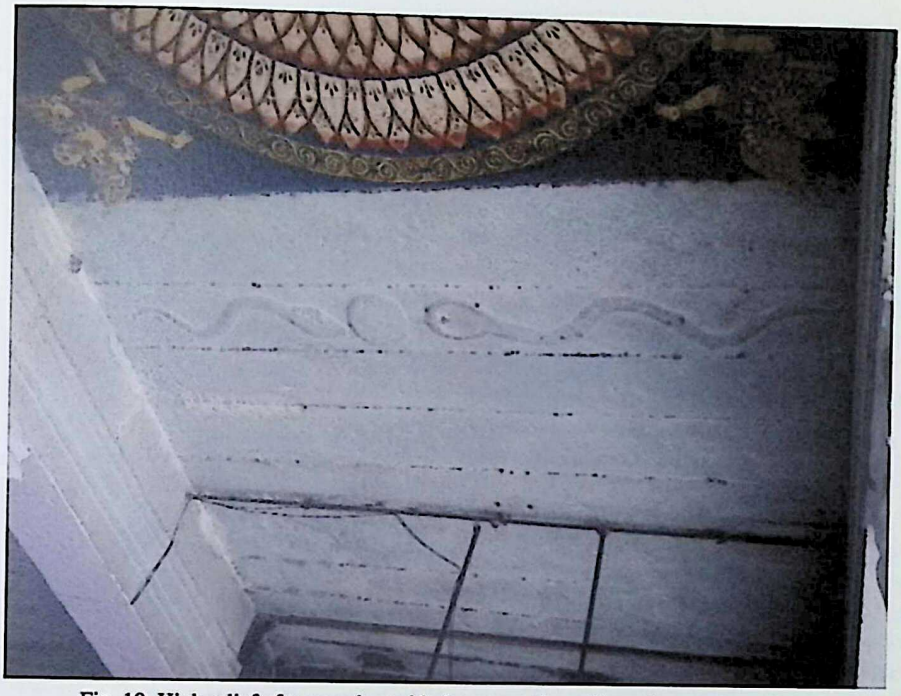

Fig. 10: High relief of two snakes with the sun on the ceiling of a *maṇḍapa* of the Pavaḷavaṇṇa Perumāḷ temple in Kanchipuram (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

Questions Addressed in this Contribution

Even though the two "golden lizards" are hardly ever mentioned in literature on Kanchipuram or on the Varadarāja temple, two of Kanchipuram's temple legends (*sthalamāhātmyas*) in Sanskrit each devote one full chapter to them. Taking the textual, oral, performative, and material aspects of the "golden lizards" in the Varadarāja temple as the basis of the following considerations, this contribution outlines:

- how competing narratives relating to a specific religiously significant place in the temple exist side by side;
- how this significant place impacts the textual narratives rather than the other way around, and
- how at the same time so-called "folk religiosity" is integrated into "elite (sanskritic) religion" in both texts and in actual ritual practice.

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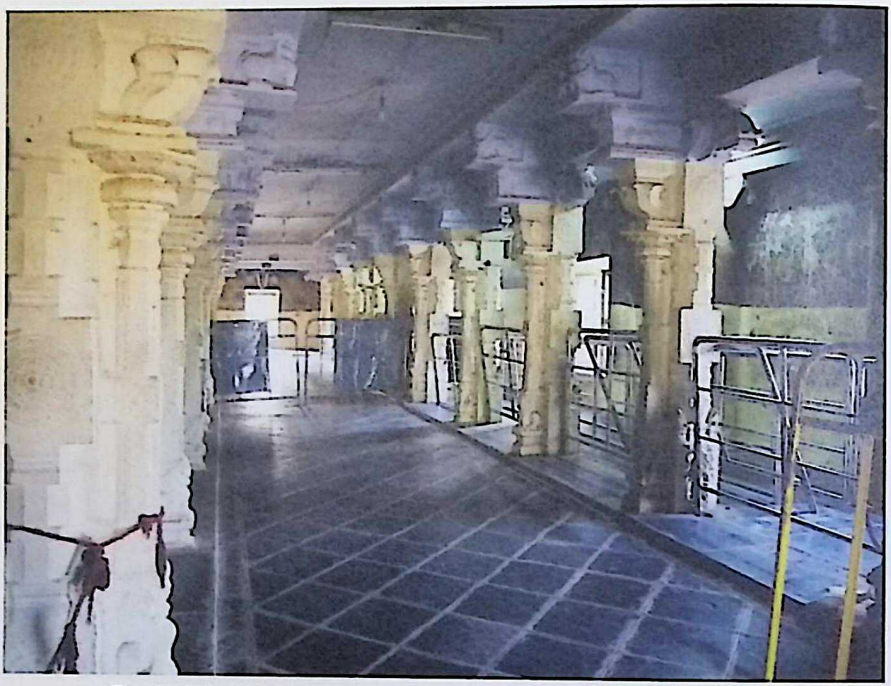

Fig. 11: Pillars in the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2015).

Dating the Lizard Reliefs

The wooden plank with the "golden lizards" is installed on the ceiling of the first corridor (*vaiyamāḷikai prākāra*) leading around the *sanctum sanctorum* in the central building of the Varadarāja temple. This central building is called "the hill" (Skt. *-giri*, *-śaila*, Tam. *malai*), as it is two-storey high. According to Raman (1975, 149) it is likely that this building was constructed during the reign of the Cōḻa king Rājādirāja I (eleventh century; "middle Chola style"). The *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* is the closed pillared verandah which constitutes the pilgrims' path for the clockwise circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇapātha*) of the temple's central chamber (*garbhagṛha*). This *prākāra* is mentioned in the list of teacher-student succession (*guruparamparā*) of Piṉpaḻakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar (thirteenth century).[11] Yet a good part of the enclosure might date from the Vijayanagara time: Raman points out that the pillars of this

11 "Piṉpaḻakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar is traditionally said to be Nampiḷḷai's disciple, hence a co-disciple of Periyavāccāṉ Piḷḷai and Vaṭakkuttiruvīti Piḷḷai (Piḷḷai Lokācārya's father)" writes Suganya Anandakichenin in an email communication (February 17, 2021). I thank Dr. Suganya Anandakichenin for sharing her knowledge about Piṉpaḻakiya Perumāḷ Jīyar with me.

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prākāra are of Vijayanagara type (Raman 1975, 44) (figure 11). Accordingly, the "golden lizards" (or high reliefs of lizards on this part of the ceiling) might have been part of the *prākāra* since the Vijayanagara times, likely not earlier.

The Lizards in Kanchipuram's Sanskrit *Sthalamāhātmyas*

The popularity and rituals connected to these two lizards do not seem to be just a modern phenomenon, as they are dealt with in two of the city's sectarian *sthalamāhātmyas* in Sanskrit.[12] These two texts deal with the origin, the location, the attributed significance, and with the rituals connected to these lizards. However, the two narratives—each encompassing a full chapter in their respective text—do not have much in common and it remains uncertain whether the respective "lizard chapters" have been part of the main texts of these two Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* from the beginning, or whether they have been added to the main text later.

The Lizard Narrative in the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(V))

As the two lizards are in the Varadarāja temple, it is not surprising that the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* of Vaiṣṇava sectarian affiliation (KM(V); *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, 1906) dedicates an entire chapter to the two lizards. In the second to last of its thirty-two chapters (chapter 31), the story of the lizards is detailed in fifty-two verses. However, the preceding chapter 30 ends by saying: "Thus I have narrated to you, o king, the majesty of the eighteen places of the one who is armed with the bow Śārṅga (= Viṣṇu) in Kāñcī, in *satyavratakṣetra*. For these eighteen places are indeed mentioned in the hall of the great Brahmā's horse-sacrifice, o lord of kings."[13] With these two verses the text refers to and summarizes the major narrative motif of the KM(V): in order to make Viṣṇu appear before him, god Brahmā performs a horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) in Kanchipuram, thereby transforming the area into a sacrificial site. Since with this statement the major part of this temple legend is concluded, it is not unlikely that the following chapters, that is, chapters 31 and 32, constitute later additions to the main text of this *sthalamāhātmya*. The last chapter of the KM(V) (chapter 32) is very short. It consists of only twenty-five verses and briefly narrates the origin of the Palar river (*kṣīranadī*), in which Śiva's bull Nandi plays a crucial role (KM(V) 32.1–

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12 For a detailed overview over Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmyas*, see Buchholz's contribution to this volume. Like other genres of mythological literature, temple legends present themselves as timeless divine revelation, thus obliterating all traces of their human authors. This "authorlessness" of the texts makes it difficult, if not impossible, to date them with precision, and also accounts for the fluid nature of their content: while being handed on, temple legends were altered and were thus transmitted in numerous vastly divergent recensions.

13 KM(V) 30.73–74: *evam aṣṭādaśasthānamāhātmyaṃ śārṅgadhanvanaḥ | kāṃcyāṃ satyavratakṣetre kathitaṃ te mayā nṛpa || aśvamedhasya śālāyāṃ brahmaṇaḥ parameṣṭhinaḥ | sthānāny etāni rājendra proktāny aṣṭādaśaiva hi ||*.

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10). In addition, ten verses in this chapter refer to three Śiva temples: Vṛṣabheśa (KM(V) 32.11–14), Puṇyakoṭīśa (KM(V) 32.15–17ab), and Śānteśa (KM(V) 32.17cd–20ab).[14] These three temples are then called "Rudra's places in Kāñcī" at the end of the chapter (KM(V) 32.20cd).[15] The entire chapter therefore might also well have been added to the main text as an afterthought, since chapters 1 to 30 deal with Vaiṣṇava temples and *tīrthas* in Kanchipuram, and mention Śaiva temples and *tīrthas* only in the context of these Vaiṣṇava narratives. Another indication that points towards a later addition of the "lizard chapter" to the main text of the KM(V) is the specific narrative framing of this chapter. This chapter differs from the other chapters in the KM(V), as it is framed similar to the frame story of the entire KM(V): similar to chapter one, chapter 31 starts with a discussion among Ṛṣis about an important aspect of universal rights and duties (*dharma*). No other chapter of the KM(V) starts with such a frame story. While the Ṛṣis in chapter one discuss which religious acts done by humans are most significant, as they imply that Viṣṇu grants them liberation (*mokṣa*),[16] here in chapter 31 the god Indra asks the Ṛṣis, which of the four stages of life (*āśrama*) is most important.[17] A dispute among the Ṛṣis on this matter then provides the background to the lizard narrative (see below). As such, chapter 31 could as well be a stand-alone *sthalamāhātmya*, as its content does not build on or even relate to the narratives that precede it.

Chapter 31 of the KM(V) (for the printed text, see Appendix 1) begins with Indra asking the Ṛṣis, which of the four stages of life (*āśrama*) is most important. While

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14 A shrine named Vṛṣabheśvara is mentioned in the forty-first chapter of the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(Ś); 1967) and is located in the fourth prākāra of the Ekāmbareśvara temple. However, according to the KM(V), Vṛṣabheśa is located north of *Hastiśaila* (Varadarāja), yet at the shore of the Palar river (KM(V) 32.12: *uttare hastiśailasya kṣīranadyās taṭe śubhe | saṃsthāpya liṃgaṃ rudrasya pūjayāmāsa vai vṛṣaḥ* ||). As the Palar river today flows to the south of the Varadarāja temple, we might see here a reference to an older riverbed, which we also see in other passages of the Kāñcīmāhātmyas (for details, see Buchholz in this volume, fn. 37). Moreover, it remains unclear whether the text refers to the Vṛṣabheśa shrine in the Ekāmranātha temple, or to another Vṛṣabheśa temple. Puṇyakoṭīśvara is described in KM(Ś) 5.1–70. This temple is located to the south-west of the Varadarāja temple. Śānteśa is neither mentioned in the KM(Ś) nor could I locate this temple in or near Kanchipuram.

15 These three Śaiva places are then said to represent 1008 (v.l.: 108) wish-fulfilling places (KM(V) 32.21).

16 KM(V) 1.7: *keneha karmaṇā nṝṇāṃ bhaven muktiprado hariḥ | yajñena tapasā vātha kiṃ vā dānena yātrayā* ||. In KM(V) chapter 1, Vasiṣṭha argues that any act, if done with devotion to Viṣṇu, leads to liberation (KM(V) 1.27), and that the concrete act (*tapas*, *yajña*, *tīrthyātra*, *dāna*) depends on the *yuga*. In the end, giving to Brahmins turns out to be the right way to attain *mokṣa*. Then the sages ask Vasiṣṭha about the right place, time, and person to which gifts should be given. This provides the occasion for Vasiṣṭha to praise Kanchipuram as the best of all places, starting with chapter 2 of the KM(V).

17 KM(V) 31.6: *caturṇām āśramāṇāṃ hi garīyān ka udāhṛtaḥ | taṃ āśramaṃ puṇyatamaṃ sunayaḥ prabruvantu me* ||.

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the majority of the Ṛṣis agrees that the life stage as a householder (*gṛhasthāśrama*) is most important, Bṛhaspati not only disagrees and insists that the life stage as a Vedic student (*brahmacāryāśrama*) is the best, but he also calls the other Ṛṣis fools (*mūḍha*), as they do not consider the meaning of the *śāstras* (KM(V) 31.10–11). Enraged, the other Ṛṣis curse Bṛhaspati, who then is immediately born on earth as the sickly son of a poor gleaner, in a village at the shore of the Narmadā river (KM(V) 31.14–16). The following five verses (KM(V) 31.17–22) dwell on the details of the poor boy's desperate situation. As he reaches marriageable age, his desperation leads him to approach Ṛṣi Bharadvāja, who resides at the shore of river Bhāgīrathī (KM(V) 31.23). The boy tells the Ṛṣi about his fate (KM(V) 31.24–26) and explains that he wants to do severe ascetic practices (*tapas*) in order to please Viṣṇu.[18] Bharadvāja recognizes Bṛhaspati in the poor young man and advises him to go 1000 *krośas* to the south, to Satyavrata, which is a place dear to Viṣṇu. There he would find *hasti-śaila* (the elephant hill), where Viṣṇu resides as someone who grants wishes (*varada*) to everyone. As the auspicious sight (*darśana*) of this deity has the power to relieve a person of all sins, irrespective of one's background, Ṛṣi Bharadvāja advises Bṛhaspati-as-poor-young-man to go there and to perform austerities to please Varada (KM(V) 31.30–34). In order to illustrate his claim of *hastigiri*'s salvific power, Bharadvāja then narrates the story of the two lizards. This "lizard narrative" in KM(V) 31 encompasses fifty-eight verses (KM(V) 31.36-94ab):

> Upamanyu is a pious yet poor Brahmin in *kurukṣetra*. He is devoted to Viṣṇu and is married to the equally virtuous Lakṣaṇā. The couple has a small son. Although they are poor, they fulfill their ritual obligations and honor guests as gods (KM(V) 31.36–41). The small family embarks on a pilgrimage and reaches the shore of the river Godāvarī. Here, too, Upamanyu earns his living as a gleaner and with this meager income first performs the rituals and only then feeds his family and himself. One morning Upamanyu feeds his child with the "left-over" offerings. However, before he or his wife can eat, a Brahmin arrives and asks for food. Upamanyu gives this guest all the food they have, so he and his wife go hungry (KM(V) 31.42–54). When he rinses the bowl from which the Brahmin has eaten and throws the cleaning water onto the shrubs, this water with the "left-over" food of a Brahmin touches the heads of a couple of lizards living there (KM(V) 31.55–57). From this auspicious touch, the lizards' heads turn golden. They also remember their previous births and are able to communicate in human voice with Upamanyu (KM(V) 31.58–61).[19]
>
> At this point the narrative explains how the couple came to be born as lizards in their current existence (KM(V) 31.62–69):
>
> > The lizards reveal that they had been king Sagara's son Asamañja and his wife, seven lives ago. As Asamañja and his wife cruelly killed children and

18 KM(V) 31.27cd: *icchāmi vā tapaḥ kartuṃ paramaṃ viṣṇutuṣṭidam.*

19 While not explicitly mentioned, it needs to be remembered here that hearing the chirping of lizards in South Asian traditions is considered an omen (see below).

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also wild animals in the forest, they were reborn as animals, with their current rebirth as lizards.[20]

Upamanyu intends to help the lizards and therefore takes them along on his pilgrimage. However, no matter which holy place they visit,[21] the lizards are not relieved from their current form. Upamanyu then arrives in Prabhāsa, where he encounters Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya, who he asks for help (KM(V) 31.78–80). Mārkaṇḍeya advises him to go to Kanchipuram, as "it is on this earth the most meritorious destroyer of dark *karma* and gives even *mukti* to men who have done great sins" (KM(V) 31.81). Mārkaṇḍeya advises Upamanyu to bathe the lizards in the temple tank Anantasaras, and to have them have *darśana* of Varadarāja on the "elephant hill" *hastiśaila* (KM(V) 31.82–83). Upamanyu does as told and indeed, the two lizards go to heaven, leaving their despised lizard bodies with the golden heads behind (KM(V) 31.86–87). Upamanyu, together with his family, happily thanks Viṣṇu as Varada. Varada then asks Upamanyu to install the bodies of the lizards on top of the "elephant-hill" *hastiśaila*, so that the devotees could first have *darśana* of him, and then touch the lizard couple and thus get rid of illnesses (KM(V) 31.88–92).

Now the text briefly returns to the frame story with Bṛhaspati, who had been cursed to be a poor gleaner's son: Bṛhaspati swiftly goes to Kanchipuram, performs austerities at the shore of the temple tank Anantasaras, has *darśana* and worships Varada with devotion during the Dvāpara Yuga, and then reaches the highest abode (KM(V) 31.94cd-98a).

The Lizard Narrative in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV)

The text *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV) is a temple legend of Kanchipuram, which represents at least in parts the perspective of the goddess Kāmākṣī.[22] The text encompasses fourteen chapters, and chapter 2 to 5 mainly deal with the area known as "Viṣṇu Kanchi" in this south-eastern part of the town. In the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*, the lizards are first briefly mentioned in chapter 2: "One *aṃśa* to the east (of the four-armed [Viṣṇu]) is the pair of lizards, having a golden and a silver body, who were twice-born and installed previously [there] by Śakra (= Indra)" (KV 2.27cd–28ab). The lizards are mentioned just before some crucial details of the physical lay-out of the

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20 The story of Sagara and his descendants is narrated, with variations, in the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, and in several Purāṇas; see Bock 1984.

21 Explicitly named are Vārāṇasī, Haridvāra, Puṣkara, Prayāga, Naimiṣa, Vṛṣabhādri, Ahobala, Siṃhādri, Gokarṇa, Śrīśaila and Kaurma (KM(V) 31.74–75).

22 On the sectarian orientation of this text, see Ambach, this volume. Thus far, we know of only one manuscript of the text (see Buchholz, this volume, fn. 26). There exist two printed editions of the text (*Kāmākṣīvilāsa: Śrī kārveṭinagarasaṃsthānādhīśvarāṇāṃ śrī bommarājamūrdhābhiṣiktānāṃ nideśena śrī Mārkaṇḍeyapurānāntargataḥ śrīkāmakoṭimahimadarśaḥ śrī kāmākṣīvilāsākhyraṃthaḥ*, 1889, in Telugu script, and *Śrīmārkaṇḍeyapurāṇāntargataḥ Śrīkāmakoṭimahimādarśaḥ*, 1968, in Devanagari script).

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Varadarāja temple are explained. Most of KV's chapter 3, entitled "the power of the 'elephant hill'" (*hastiśailaprabhāvaḥ*), is dedicated to the lizard story, which is narrated by Mārkaṇḍeya to king Suratha (see Appendix 2 for the printed text of KV 3). One major aim of the story is to explain how and why the place came to be in the shape of an elephant.[23] The narrative in chapter 3 of the KV runs as follows:

> Goddess Sarasvatī and goddess Lakṣmī argue who of them can be considered superior. They ask Indra for his judgement, who picks Lakṣmī. This angers Sarasvatī and she curses Indra to take the form of an elephant (KV 3.7–15ab). Lakṣmī tries to help and tells Indra-as-elephant to go to the "*daṇḍaka* forest at the highest lion mountain (*siṃhācala*)". There he would find a boy named Prahlādaka, the best of Viṣṇu's devotees (KV 3.17). Prahlādaka would give him the thirty-two-syllabelled *mantra*. This *mantra* would facilitate his entry to Viṣṇu's holy area (*harikṣetra*), where the lion would relieve him of the curse (KV 3.18–21). Indra-as-elephant does as told and enters the city of Kanchipuram (KV 3.22–24). There, "Viṣṇu as Narasiṃha (the divine man-lion) went into Indra's heart in the form of thought, and bound Śakra with his lotus hands, who had taken the elephant form. He opened the heart of this elephant and out came the king of the gods" (KV 3.25–26ab). Narasiṃha makes the elephant into a hill and takes residence in this elephant mountain as a statue in Yoga posture.[24] Indra worships him (KV 3.26cd–28ab). However, when Indra is about to return to his own world, he sees two beautiful Brahmin boys emerging from the mountain (KV 3.28cd–29). He asks them who they are and where they come from (KV 3.30–31ab). Here begins the actual narrative pertaining to the lizards. The boys explain:
>
>> "We are two Brahmins, sons of Śṛṅgiberi, named Hema and Śukla, born in the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*, belonging to the Vaikhānasasūtra, conversant in the texts of this line, two boys and *brahmacārins*. We are students of Gautama on the Bhadra mountain." They lived in an *āśrama* in the Koṅkana area. They had been cursed by their *guru* to be lizards, as once, while they were collecting *samidh* sticks for the sacrifice, a black lizard had fallen in the pot filled with water for their *guru* Gautama's *pūjā*. As lizards they fell by accident on Indra-the-elephant's back and were taken by him to Kanchipuram. Once there, they were freed from the curse by the power of the place. They greeted Indra, venerated Varada, left their lizard form, and went home (KV 3.31cd–39).
>
> Indra, after hearing their story, places their lizard bodies on the mountain and grants the mountain the boon that its sight be as effective as praising Viṣṇu's

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23 KV 3.4-6: *hastiśailo mahāpuṇyo vartate parvatottamaḥ | gajābhidheyakaś śailo harikṣetrasya bhūṣaṇam* ‖ KV 3.4 ‖ *puṇyakoṭyāṃ nivāsena puṇyakoṭir iti śrutaḥ | purā mahendraśāpena parvato 'bhūd gajottamaḥ* ‖ KV 3.5 ‖ *tad ahaṃ sampravakṣyāmi purāvṛttaṃ caritrakam | tasya śravaṇamātreṇa sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate* ‖ KV 3.6 ‖.

24 This part of the narrative refers to the *mūrti* of Yoganarasiṃha which is installed in the Varadarāja temple at the foot of the "elephant hill" (figure 12).

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name during Ekādaśī. Consequently, those who come to Hastigiri seeking *mokṣa*, reach Viṣṇu's abode just by seeing this mountain (KV 3.40–45ab).

The chapter closes with a short story that exemplifies this claim: a Brahmin named Gaṇu lived a bad life as a murderer and robber. However, he nevertheless reached Viṣṇu's world after death, because he had seen the elephant mountain (KV 3.45cd–54). Mārkaṇḍeya, the narrator of the story, adds that just hearing this story brings the same results as seeing the elephant mountain (KV 3.55–57).

Fig. 12: *Utsavamūrti* of Yoganarasiṃha in the Varadarāja temple, during Narasiṃhajayanti (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2015).

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Comparison of KM(V) and KV

While the two texts give different accounts of the lizards' origins, they also bear commonalities: both stories agree in claiming that the sacred space of *satyavratakṣetra* has the power to release from curses, and that the two lizards profited from this power and escaped their curse along with their animal bodies, which they left behind.

Yet it stands out that only in the Vaiṣṇava text KM(V) the salvific power of the god Varada on the *hastiśaila* (elephant hill) in Kanchipuram, in the holy field *satyavratakṣetra*, is explicitly contrasted with less powerful holy places. Upamanyu takes the lizard couple to several other Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva holy sites (Vārāṇasī, Haridvāra, Puṣkara, Prayāga, Naimiṣa, Vṛṣabhādri, Ahobala, Siṃhādri, Gokarṇa, Śrīśaila and Kaurma), but only Kanchipuram has the power to release the lizards from their curse (KM(V) 31.74–75). Kanchipuram is described as giving "*mukti* even to men who have done great sins" (KM(V) 31.81). This speaks of an underlying competition of the Vaiṣṇava places in Kanchipuram with other pilgrimage sites.[25] The Śākta text KV shows no signs of such competition.

It is also evident that the efficacy of the rituals performed on or in connection with *hastiśaila* are represented differently in both texts. In the Vaiṣṇava version KM(V), the existence of the golden lizards on *hastiśaila* is explained, the rituals connected to them are prescribed, but their rituals are tied into and dependent on the auspicious sight (*darśana*) of Viṣṇu as Varadarāja in the centre of the temple: in the KM(V) Varada asks Upamanyu to install the bodies of the lizards on top of *hastiśaila*, so that the devotees could first have *darśana* of him, and then touch the lizard couple and thus get rid of illnesses (KM(V) 31.91–92). Consequently, the lizards' efficacy *adds* to the efficacy of Varada, but is not independent of the main deity in this temple. In contrast, in the KV, not Varadarāja, but the elephant hill is of crucial importance: seeing the elephant hill (or hearing his story) brings *mokṣa* (KV 3.41–45ab, and 3.55–57ab). Even more importantly, the KV's version narrates that the god Indra—and not Varadarāja—gave this salvific power to the mountain as a boon. Indra rather than Viṣṇu is central to the KV story: he is cursed to be an elephant, which then explains both the name and the form of the building at the centre of the Varadarāja temple.[26] Only the KV's version uses the lizard story to explain the name and the form of the (centre of the) temple: Hastigiri, the elephant-hill, is the elephant form that Indra left behind when he was released from his curse. In the KM(V), the "hill" is explained as being a hill (*valmīka*) made of the ground dug up by Varāha (KM(V) 2.51–52, 3.54) and the name "elephant hill" is explained as

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25 In this context it might be significant that the Śaiva versions of Kanchipuram's temple legends do not mention the lizards at all—possibly ignoring them on purpose, so as to not give the Varadarāja temple undue credit.

26 This might have to do with Indra's mythical white elephant Airāvata, although he is not explicitly mentioned here.

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referring to the many elephants that roamed the woods in this area, and by reference to the *gajendramokṣa* story (KM(V) 3.55–57)[27], which is an important narrative connected to Kanchipuram's Aṣṭabhuja temple (KM(V) 13.19–23).

However, among the residents of Kanchipuram today, there is no unanimous opinion about the reason why the hill at the centre of the Varadarāja temple is called Hastigiri[28], "elephant hill." A senior member of the Tātācārya families, Śrīnivāsa Tātācārya (Ambi Ayyangar) in an interview conducted on March 2, 2003, insisted that Varadarāja was venerated by an elephant here and that the place is called Hastigiri for this reason.[29] His notion was mainly based on Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, and especially on the texts composed by Kūrattāḻvār and by Vedāntadeśika. Thus, Śrīnivāsa Tātācārya pointed out that this motif is also referred to in Vedāntadeśika's *Varadarājapañcāśat* (*śloka* 1) and in Kūrattāḻvār's *Varadarājastava* (*śloka* 1).[30] In these texts, the Purāṇic story of Gajendramokṣa is alluded to, according to which Viṣṇu saved the elephant Gajendra from the jaws of a crocodile (Srinivasan 2004, 80). It is also debated whether the name of the temple in fact derives from Sanskrit *hasti*, "elephant". While the Tamil term *atti* could in fact be derived from Skt. *hasti*, it might also be that the Sanskrit *hasti* here is a (mistaken) Sanskrit rendering of Tamil *atti*, which refers to the *atti* tree, which is the material of Varadarāja's original *mūlamūrti*, which is immersed in the temple tank today.[31] Further explanations of Hastigiri are for example that the god Varadarāja is well known for his hand (Skt. *hasta*) gesture, the *abhayamūdra* (the gesture indicating "have no fear"!). Hence his name is *hastin* and the place is called Hastigiri. Another explanation is that Varadarāja first appeared in this place "on the ascendancy of Hasta Nakṣatram and hence this place is called Hastigiri" (Srinivasan 2004, 80). Yet another common interpretation is that "In olden days lots of elephants used to be around this hill. Elephant is *hasti*, and since the elephants used to be here, it is Hastigiri" (Sīma Bhaṭṭar, interview, January 11, 2003; see also Srinivasan 2004, 80). One of the temple priests in an interview voiced the opinion that Indra, due to a curse, had become an elephant, and that Varadarāja used to ride on him (Sīma Bhaṭṭar, interview, January 11, 2003). Thus, while the name of the hill "elephant hill" clearly warrants an explanation, many different interpretations exist side by side.

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27 In KM(Ś) 5.62–63 the name *Hastigiri* is also connected to the *gajendramokṣa* story.

28 Raman (1975, 7) also mentions the designation *tyāgamaṇḍapa*, mentioned in the text *Hastiśailavaibhava*, which however seems not to be not used today.

29 Similarly, Varada Tatacharya (1978, 46) claims that the name *attiyūr* is based on Hastigiri, which means a place where the *aṣṭadig-gajas* worshipped the god (see also Srinivasan 2004, 80).

30 Raman argues that the occurrence of the names *Hastigiri* and *Karigiri* (elephant-hill) in the Sanskrit work *Varadarājastava* by Kūrattāḻvār suggests that a nucleus of the legend was already current during the eleventh century CE (Raman 1975, 9).

31 For details see Raman (1975, 4–6). The designation *attiyūr* for the village surrounding the Varadarāja-temple and its derivatives are mainly found in found in the hymns of Pūtattāḻvār and the earlier Cōḻa inscriptions of the temple (Raman 1975, 8).

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As mentioned above, chapter 31 of the KM(V) would work well as a stand-alone *sthalamāhātmya*. Its content does not build on or relate to the narratives that precede it. In contrast, the third chapter of KV is much more neatly embedded in the overall textual structure of KV: chapter 2 to 5 deal with the "Vaiṣṇava realm" of Kanchipuram, e.g., with *harikṣetra* (chapter 2), *hastiśaila* (chapter 3, the lizard story is part of the narrative that explains why the hill is an "elephant hill"), Brahmā's *aśvamedha* sacrifice and Varadarāja's appearance (chapter 4), and the river Vegavatī (chapter 5). It is not unlikely that the lizard chapter entered the larger body of KM(V)'s narratives about the greatness of the main Vaiṣṇava sacred spaces of Kanchipuram *because* the ritual practice connected to the lizards was both pervasive and efficacious.[32]

Lizards in the *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam*

The *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam* (TPM) is a Tamil text which was published in 1937 (Cuntaravaratācāriyar 1937) (see Appendix 3 for the printed version of the TPM). This text treats the lizard-story as a *māhātmya* in its own right. Moreover, this text is the first active "promotion" of the "golden lizards" in the Varadarāja temple that we know of. The date of its publication indicates that it most likely was authored to meet the demands of an anticipated increased influx of pilgrims, triggered by the 1937 Atti Varata Vaipavam festival. This festival is celebrated only once in ca. fourty years. During this event, the old statue of the main image in this temple, which is made of *atti* wood and is kept under water in the temple tank Anantasaras, is taken out of the water and displayed publicly for ca. fourty days. In 1937, this festival was advertised widely for the first time, with the aim to sell tickets and thus to increase the income of the temple.[33] While Cuntaravaratācāriyar, the author of the TPM, does not mention this rare festival in his preface or foreword to the TPM, he explicitly says that he compiled this text for the benefit of the pilgrims[34] and that he hopes to fund the elementary school he runs through the income generated by selling the TPM.[35]

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32 This suspicion is supported by the fact that the KM(V) explicitly lists rituals connected to the lizards and mentions their power to heal from illnesses, which are missing in the KV.

33 Interview with Sundararajan, July 4, 2019.

34 TMP, p. 1: "Pilgrims from many parts of our motherland India come daily to discover the greatness of the golden lizards, and to quench their thirst for information, I dared to publish it in this booklet" (*nam tāy nāṭākiya intiyāviṉ palapākaṅkaḷiliruntu, piratitiṇamum varum yātrīkarkaḷ taṅkappallikaḷiṉ mahātmiyattai terintuk koḷḷa, niṟampa āval paṭu vatāl, avarkaḷuṭaiya āvalait taṇikka, atai icciṟu puttaka vāyilāka veḷiyiṭat tuṇintēṉ*).

35 TMP, p. 2: "Most of the printing costs of this booklet is borne by the author of the book, who runs the 'Sri Krishna Elementary School', which is established and maintained at Chinna Kanchipuram Chetty Street. I humbly request that the public should view this book, endorse it, buy it, and through it also support the running of the school mentioned above" (*icciṟu puttakattiṉ kirayattukaiyil acciṭṭa cilavukaḷ pōka mikutiyai itaṉ āciriyar ciṉṉa kāñcipuram ceṭṭitte-*

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His text TPM is a Tamil compilation of both Sanskrit stories summarized above, though relying more on the KM(V) than on the KV. Yet while the text itself claims to be a Tamil version of the thirty-first chapter of the KM(V),[36] the author in fact mixes narrative motifs of KM(V) and KV. For example, according to his version, the Ṛṣi Bṛhaspati is cursed by the Ṛṣis to be an elephant (cf. KV 3.15, where Indra is cursed to be an elephant by Sarasvatī), not to be born as a son of a poor gleaner, as the KM(V) (31.16) has it.[37] However, while the story of Upamanyu and the two lizards is narrated in this context (TPM, p. 6–16), the author Cuntaravaratācāriyar does not return to the frame story with Bṛhaspati-as-elephant. Unlike the KV, the Tamil text therefore does not identify the Hastigiri with the left-behind form of the elephant—in fact, the reader does not learn at all what becomes of Bṛhaspati in the end. Another motif taken from the KV rather than the KM(V) is narrated in the author's preface, which very briefly summarizes the content of the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcī-māhātmya* (TPM, pp. 3–5). Here, Cuntaravaratācāriyar cites as the reason for Brahmā's horse sacrifice Brahmā's desire to receive the *sṛṣṭidaṇḍa* from Viṣṇu, a stick that would enable him to create the world.[38] This *sṛṣṭidaṇḍa* is not mentioned in the KM(V). Rather, there Brahmā performs the sacrifice to make Viṣṇu appear before him. Moreover, the TPM text is much longer than KM(V) by going into detail regarding the lizards' bad deeds as descendants of Sagara. In the TPM the sage Mārkaṇḍeya narrates this myth in great detail over nearly four pages (TPM, pp. 10–15; of overall eleven pages of text). Since this story only superficially relates to Kanchipuram and the lizards, one cannot but suspect that the author of the TPM used this story to fill the pages.[39]

Most importantly, the power attributed to the lizards is highlighted in various passages of the TPM. In the preface, the TPM (p. 5) explains:

> Normally, when house lizards fall on (a person), they cause the faults (*doṣa*) mentioned in the first attachment (of this booklet). If anyone sees or touches these

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ruvil stāpittu naṭattivarum śrī kiruṣṇā elimeṇṭeri pāṭacālaiyiṉ upayōkattiṟku eṭuttuk koḷḷappaṭu-mākaiyāl. mahājaṉaṅkaḷ ipputtakattaik kaṇṇuṟṟu, niṟampa visvāsattuṭaṉ ātarittu, vāṅki, mēṟpati pāṭacālaiyai naṭaipeṟac ceyya vēṇumāy niṟampa paṇivuṭaṉ kēṭṭuk koḷḷukiṟēṉ). T. K. Cuntaravaratācāriyar also was hereditarily in charge of the deity Varadarāja's jewlery (Murli Bhaṭṭar, interview, March 9, 2017).

36 TMP, p. 6: "The story of *Taṅkappalli Mahātmyam* in the thirty-first chapter of the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*" (*taṅkappalli mahātmiya varalāṟu. prammāṇṭa purāṇē śrīkāñci mahātmiyē 31-vatu atyāyē*).

37 TPM, p. 6: "Due to this curse, he was born into this world as an elephant" (*anta cāpa vicēṣattāl ippū lōkattil yāṉaiyāka vantu*).

38 TPM, p. 4: "Viṣṇu appeared under the Puṇyakoṭivimāna with the *sṛṣṭidaṇḍa* in front of Brahmā and granted him the *sṛṣṭidaṇḍa* he had demanded" (*śrī pēraḷāḷaṉeṉṟum tirunāmamuṭaiyarāy puṇyakōṭivimāṉamatyaṅkatarāy sruṣṭitaṇṭattuṭaṉ prammāvukku cākṣātkāramāki, avar kōriya ciruṣṭi taṇṭattaik koṭuttaruḷiṉār*).

39 Seeing that he was keen to sell the booklet and use the money to run the elementary school he managed, I cannot but sympathize with him.

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> lizards after having had auspicious sight of Śrī Varadarāja, he will be relieved from the stain of sins, illnesses and ailments. Even if, after *darśana* (of the golden lizards), lizards should fall on someone, if one thinks for even a second of the *vaiyamāḷikai* lizards, then in that moment the fault will be removed.[40]

Similarly, the lizard story in the TPM ends with Varadarāja's advice (TPM, p. 16):

> If anyone worships me on the Hastigiri, afterwards does the *pradakṣiṇa*, thinks of, worships, or touches the embedded golden lizards there while thinking of them as *vaiyamāḷikai* lizards, if lizards fall on him afterwards, the sin, illness and stain will be dispelled.[41]

Of the KM(V) and KV, only the former connects touching the "golden lizards" with the avoidance or removal of illness (KM(V) 31.88–92), whereas in the KV Indra grants the elephant hill the boon that its mere sight would grant *mokṣa* (KV 3.40–45ab). The KV thus attributes no specific power to the lizards as they are installed on the elephant hill. In contrast, the ill effects of lizards falling on a person are a major concern of the TPM, as after the end of the *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam* story, the text lists in an appendix the "outcome of the fall of lizards" (*palli viḻutaliṉ palaṉ*; TPM, p. 17), thus explicitly connecting the temple legend with the South Indian divinatory "folk" science related to house lizards.

Lizards in South India's Popular Religiosity

As Frembgen (1996) based on his literary review and interview in Pakistan and North India shows, not only in South India are people afraid of lizards. House lizards are often considered poisonous, even though in fact they are harmless (see also Thurston 1912, 99). They have a shrill voice which is considered a bad omen in many parts of South Asia (Frembgen 1996, 136–137; Thurston 1912, 16, 48, 70). In South India, a science as to interpret the cries of lizards developed, interpreting the direction from where the sound comes.[42] Since lizards are thought to be poisonous, contact with lizards is avoided by all means (Frembgen 1996, 139).[43] Both events, hearing the cry of a lizard and the fall of a lizard on one's limbs, have for long been interpreted

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40 TPM, p. 5: *sātāraṇamāka vīṭṭilirukkum pallikaḷ, mēlē viḻuntāl 1-vatu aṉupantattil kaṇṭirukkum tōṣaṅkaḷ uṇṭākiṉṟaṇa. inta palli uruvaṅkaḷai evaṉoruvaṉ śrī varatarājaṉai taricittup piṟaku, taricittālum allatu sparicittālum, avaṉ pāpatōṣa, rōka, camaṇaṅkaḷai yaṭaintu caukkiyamaṭaivāṉ. ivaikaḷai taricitta piṟaku pallikaḷ mēlē viḻuntāluṅ kūṭa. oru kṣaṇa nēram vaiyamāḷikaippalli eṉṟu maṇatāra smarittāl anta nimiṣattil anta tōṣam nivāraṇamāy viṭum.*

41 TMP, p. 16: *yāvaṉoruvaṉ inta hattikiriyil eṉṉai cēvittavaṉantaram pātakṣaṇastiluḷḷa ippallikaḷai vaiyamāḷikaip palli eṉṟu kṣaṇakālam smarittālum sēvittālum sparicittālum avaṉukkup pallikaḷ mēlē viḻuvatāluṇṭākum pāpa rōka tōṣa camaṇaṅkaḷ uṇṭām eṉpatu tiṉṉam.*

42 Frembgen (1996, 137), referring to Walhouse (1876, 21). See also Ayyar 1992.

43 At the same time, one should never kill a house lizard, as it brings prosperity and is also connected to fertility (Frembgen 1996, 140). On the connection of lizards and fertility, see also Guy (2019, 319).

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as omen, and several texts contain prognostications based on the sounds produced by the house lizard, by its movements and by its fall on the various limbs of a person.[44] The text *Dharmasindhu* gives details regarding the significance of a lizard's fall on one's body parts. Moreover, according to this text, the impact of a lizard's fall also depends on whether the lizard falls on a man or a woman. This text also explains that the impact of a lizard's fall can removed for example by taking a bath with clothes on, by drinking *pañcagavya* (a mixture of five cow-products), looking into clarified butter, or by paying honor to (a golden image of) a lizard (Kane 1977, 792). Today, the prognostication based on a lizard's fall on one's body parts is common in South India, and the author of the TPM was not only aware of it, but placed his text in this context, as the appendix to the TPM shows: here, he gives a list of forty body parts and the assumed impact of a lizard's fall on it (TPM, pp. 17–18). As lizards are considered to be poisonous, if a lizard falls into or touches food, this food is considered poisonous, too. Frembgen (1996, 139) reports:

> For example, Ashok Mukherji, a Bengali living in Kanpur, told me of an incident he had heard about in which two boys in Varanasi bought sweets and some yogurt in a clay pot from a shop. In the pot they found a dead gecko, which they removed along with some of the yogurt. They then ate the yogurt; they are said to have died soon after.

One cannot but notice the remarkable overlap of narrative elements between this story and the KV's lizard narrative: two boys with a clay pot, a lizard falling into the pot and the dire consequences for the two boys.

Popularization of the "Golden Lizards" after 1950

It remains unclear, how successful the TPM's version of the lizard narrative was, and it is not known to me whether Cuntaravaratācāriyar managed to finance the Sri Krishna Elementary School with the income generated by the *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam*. It is however clear that the transregional importance of the lizards has been decidedly promoted roughly twenty years later, since the mid-1950s.

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44 Thurston (1912, 70–71). Kane mentions for example *Vasantarāja-śakuna*, *Adbhutasāgara*, *Jyotisattva*, *Śāntiratna* (or *Śāntikamalākara*), and *Dharmasindhu* and suspects that prognostication based on the fall of the lizard on a person's limb developed later than prognostication based on the sounds of lizards (see also Kane 1977, 792 and fn. 1282b). On prognostications relating to the house lizard, see the PhD-project by Dominique Baur.

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Fig. 13: Srinivasan's grandfather, holding Srinivasan as a toddler (ca. 1970) (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2017).

In two interviews the main temple musician (*ūtal kārar*) of the Varadarāja temple, Srinivasan, described to me how his grandfather (figure 13), a musician who enjoyed transregional repute and who also worked as a pilgrims' guide in the Varadarāja temple, advertised the two lizards transregionally (interview, September 7, 2017). As a guide, he would show the two lizards to the pilgrims. However, as the lizards are on the ceiling, too high up to actually touch them by hand, the pilgrims would throw a piece of cloth or a coin at the ceiling, and afterwards touch their eyes and forehead with the coin or cloth. Even today one can observe such a practice in the Varadarāja temple. In December and January, when Kanchipuram's temples are especially crowded with pilgrims, some of these visitors—either because of lack of knowledge about *the* lizards, or because they lack the time to join the long queue for

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Fig. 14: High reliefs of lizards on the ceiling of a *maṇḍapa* in the Varadarāja temple (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2022).

the golden lizards—"touch" other high relief lizards (figure 14) they discover in the temple. They do this by throwing pieces of cloth or coins at these reliefs, with which they then touch their eyes or forehead, to realize their share in the lizards' positive effect. Seeing the attraction and popularity of the lizards, Srinivasan's grandfather aimed to make them more widely known, to attract more visitors to the temple. He had leaflets printed in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada, which contained a short version of one lizard legend, and then distributed these leaflets when he was called to play music in other towns in South India. Evidently, this form of advertising contributed substantially to the lizards' transregional popularity. Srinivasan's grandfather soon managed to draw a contract with the temple administration (annual worth then 25,000–30,000 INR), allowing him to charge pilgrims for access to the lizards. This contract was renewed annually. Srinivasan's grandfather retained this contract for sixteen years. In the beginning, he sold entrance tickets to the lizards for only fifteen paisa and still earned a lot of money (Srinivasan, interview, March 8, 2004). However, in 1972, after the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, when the flow of pilgrims suddenly had dried up, Srinivasan's grandfather gave up the contract. Since then, the temple administration (Devasthanam Board) runs the lizard ticket counter in the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* (figure 15].

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Fig. 15: The lizard ticket counter run by the Devasthanam in the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2006).

The Sign Board on the Hill

Even today, pilgrims and tourists visit the Varadarāja temple and touch these lizards for a small fee, in order to relieve themselves from the evil effect of contact with a house lizard, which is thought of as dangerous for health and well-being (see above). Typically, devotees enter the temple through the main gate, the Western *gopuram*, proceed into the temple building, pass through a second gateway into the last corridor (*prākāra*) on the ground level. There they first pay their respects to Yoganarasiṃha in the shrine (understood as a "cave") at the foot of the two-storey-high building that forms the centre of the temple. From there they walk to the Eastern side of this building, the Hastigiri or "elephant hill." There they enter the building and climb up twenty-four steps to the corridor on the upper floor. This corridor leads them first to *mahāmaṇḍapa*, a hall which allows access to another staircase towards the centre of the temple, the *garbhagṛha* with the huge stone statue of the main deity Varadarāja. After *darśana* of the main deity, devotees take the steps down again back to the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. From there they continue the clockwise circumambulation of the *sanctum sanctorum*. Right after they step out of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* and into the

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corridor, they are greeted by a sign advertising the "golden and silver lizard," which claims that touching them (for a fee of two INR) would relieve one of "all sins and evils" (figure 16). After paying the fee, they are led by metal dividers to the north-eastern corner of this corridor, where they enter an area separated from the main corridor by wooden dividers. In this chamber they climb up a ladder onto a small platform under the "golden lizards," high enough to allow them to touch with their hands the lizards installed on a plank on the ceiling (figure 17). With this, for many pilgrims their main aim of visiting this temple is fulfilled. They climb down the ladder and continue the circumambulation of the *sanctum sanctorum* of the temple, perhaps admiring the murals of important Vaiṣṇava places painted on the walls of this corridor. They climb down the stairs and continue their way around the "hill," some worship Dhanvantarī, the divine healer, on their way out.

Fig. 16: Sign board at the lizard ticket counter (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2006).

While waiting for their turn to enter the lizard area, the pilgrims see and read a short version of the legend of the lizard couple, which is written on a metal board in Tamil and Telugu near the entrance to the lizards' area (figure 18). The text reads:

Legend of the *vaiyamāḷikai* lizards

At the time when two sons of the sage Śṛṅgibera were with sage Gautama as his disciples, they brought water for the *guru* for his *pūjā*. There were two lizards in

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Fig. 17: Pilgrims touching the lizards on the ceiling of the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2017).

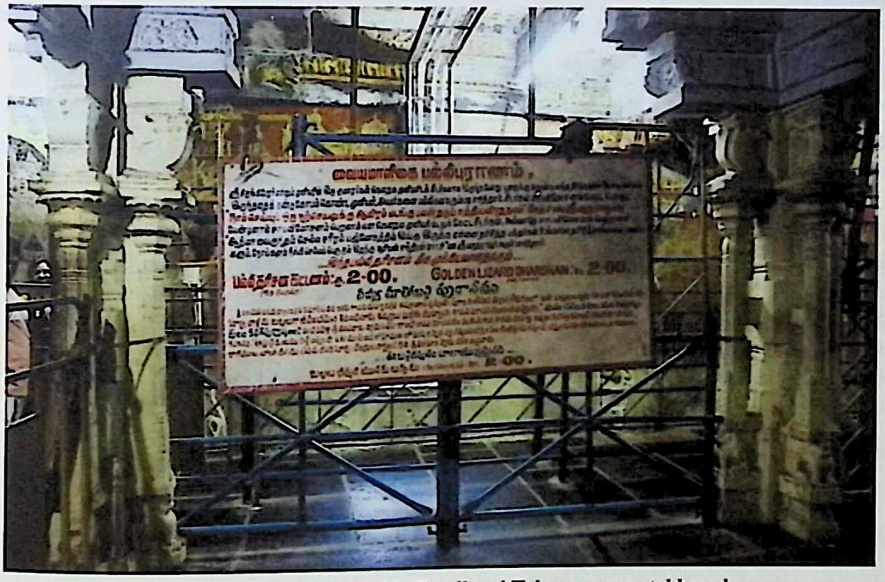

Fig. 18: The lizard legend in Tamil and Telugu on a metal board in the *vaiyamāḷikai prākāra* (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2017).

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> the water. On seeing the lizards, sage Gautama was angry and cursed [the boys] to become lizards. When the disciples asked how they could be relieved from the curse, Gautama said – "If you go and request Varadarāja in Kanchi, the Satyavrata-takṣetra, where one gets thousand times the fruit for one action, you will get rid of your curse". By doing so the disciples got rid of their curse. The souls went to Vaikuṇṭha and the (lizard) bodies remained here [in Kanchipuram] as a *pañcaloha* statue. God Varadarāja said: "If the devotees who come here to see me also see you [= the lizards], they will be relieved from all sins and illness and attain prosperity. The sun and the moon are the witness to this".[45]

No elephant is mentioned, but the positive effect of touching the lizards is emphasized. It is noteworthy that on this metal board several elements of the version of the legend given by the KV are referred to, whereas the version of the KM(V) is not referred to here at all, although this text is considered authoritative in the Varadarāja temple.[46] As the queue often is very long, the pilgrims have ample time to read this sign board and memorize the story, to retell it when they are back home.

Online Representations of the "Golden Lizards"

Not surprisingly, this version of the lizard narrative also conforms to most online sources on the "golden lizards," both in its incompleteness and in its reference to the KV narrative, rather than to the KM(V)'s narrative.[47] Thus, the Wikipedia entry on the Varadarāja temple gives the following story: "Indra, the king of celestial deities, after getting released from the curse of Goddess Saraswati, installed the silver and golden lizards who were the witness of the ordeal."[48] The online temple directory of the newspaper *Dinamalar* mentions the story of the lizards in their entry on the Varadarāja temple as follows: "Devotees also pray to the golden and silver lizards in the temple for relief from any untoward happening due to the fall of real lizards on their body. The prayer also brings them mental peace, safety and success in their endeavours."[49] One website, for example, names as remedy that one should touch "the people who visited Kanchipuram and touched the golden Lizard, the silver lizard along with the sun and moon images [...] or touching the photo frame of

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45 I thank R. Sathyanarayanan for helping me with this translation, and for comparing the Tamil and the Telugu text on the sign board.

46 In interviews I conducted on March 9, 2017, two of the temple priests of the Varadarāja temple retold the story as found in the KV, evidently not aware of or oblivious to the fact, that the KM(V) contains a different narrative.

47 See, for example, http://gotirupati.com/varadaraja-perumal-temple-kanchipuram/, date of last access February 16, 2021. However, there are also websites which give summaries of both the KV's and the KM(V)'s narratives, see https://travel727874468.wordpress.com/2018/11/20/what-is-the-uniqueness-of-lizard-temple-in-kanchipuram/; date of last access: February 16, 2021.

48 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VaradharajaPerumalTemple,Kanchipuram; date of last access: February 16, 2021.

49 See https://temple.dinamalar.com/en/new_en.php?id=633; date of last access: April 25, 2022.

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Kanchipuram golden Lizard."[50] In many online sources, the temple is even labeled as "golden lizard temple", thus confirming and reinforcing a notion often found among the pilgrims, that the lizards, rather than Viṣṇu as Varadarāja, are the most important feature of this temple.[51]

Fig. 19: Lizard plaque sold to tourists (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2018).

The "Golden Lizards" in Popular Culture

The pilgrims might even bring home small plaques with an image of the lizards (figure 19), which vendors near the temple entrance sell to tourists and pilgrims, partaking in the "lizard-economy."[52] With the increasing popularity of Kanchipuram's "golden lizards," the lizards also have received a place in the annual festival routine of Navarātri in South Indian households. During this annual festival, which is celebrated in September or October, many families in Tamil Nadu choose to "keep *kolu*": they set up in their living rooms elaborate doll displays (*kolu*) on stages for

50 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hdxF-QL804; date of last access: April 25, 2022.

51 It seems that the popularity of these lizards even led other temples to "copy" them. For example, TV5 News on April 29 (2010) reported: "Now kanchi's golden lizard darshan in Srikalahasthi temple also!!" (see https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xj8cdy; date of last access February 16, 2021).

52 A share in the income from the "lizard tickets" also forms part of the temple priests' income (Sīma Bhaṭṭar, interview, January 11, 2003).

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the entire duration of the festival. Among these dolls, the goddess is ritually installed (usually in a *kalaśa* pot filled with water and closed with mango leaves and a coconut). The *kolu* arrangements encompass many different sets of dolls, including mythological scenes and representations of ritual practices from specific temples (Hüsken 2012; Ilkama 2018). When people visit each other in the evenings to look at and admire each other's *kolu*, often the diverse scenes are pointed out and explained by the hosts (figure 20). Not surprisingly, I found an image of a "*kolu* set" representing the golden lizards at the Varadarāja temple (figure 21), and one can safely assume that their story, or one of their stories, are retold on that occasion, too.

Fig. 20: Visit of neighbors during Navarātri, when the hosts explain the diverse *kolu* sets (photo by Ute Hüsken, 2008)

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Fig. 21: The 'golden lizards' as *kolu* set.

Conclusion

The comparison of the lizard narratives in the two Sanskrit *sthalamāhātmyas* related to Kanchipuram, the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* and the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*, clearly shows how parallel or even competing narratives relating to a specific religiously significant place exist side by side. Both narratives are transmitted and accepted, irrespective of their sectarian background. Significantly, even in the Vaiṣṇava Varadarāja temple and among the Vaiṣṇavas connected to this temple, the narrative of the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* was and is not as successful as the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*'s narrative. For, the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*'s version is propagated today not only on the metal board at the entrance of the lizard-section of the Varadarāja temple, but is also internalized by several of the Vaiṣṇava temple priests, who refer to major elements from the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*'s version when retelling the lizards' story. One might suspect that the popularity of the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* version is based on its successful effort to connect the lizards with the (assumed) elephant form and the corresponding name of the central building in the Varadarāja temple, Hastigiri, the "elephant hill." This is also reflected by the more recent version of the lizard-narrative given in the Tamil text *Taṅkappallikaḷ Mahātmiyam*, which in general follows the Vaiṣṇava

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narrative, yet inserts the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*'s elephant. Thus, even though the different Hindu sects have their own versions of temple legends relating to Kanchipuram, the success of the one or the other text does not necessarily reflect people's sectarian affiliation as strictly as the authors of the texts might have hoped. Rather, the "success" of one narrative over the other, is connected to many more factors.

One of these factors in our case is certainly the importance of so-called "folk" or "vernacular" local religiosity. By these terms I refer to those aspects of religious practice, which are not derived from or integrated in Sanskrit Hinduism.[53] As the investigation of the "lizard story" in Kanchipuram's *sthalamāhātmya* texts in Sanskrit shows, the contrast between popular religion, which attaches much importance to the potentially dangerous touch of house lizards as affecting one's fate, (mis)fortune, and state of health, and normative Brahmin-dominated religion is minimized in these *sthalamāhātmya* texts. Rather, vernacular religious practice is integrated into "elite (sanskritic) religion," and hardly any distinction is made between the worship of the lizards and the worship of the main deities of the Hindu pantheon. This is a marked difference between the *sthalamāhātmya* literature in Sanskrit and the *āgama* and *saṃhitā* literature pertaining to temple worship. While the latter rather reflects the priestly and normative view on what should happen in a temple, *sthalamāhātmya* texts rather reflect actual practices in a temple, which not always conform to Brahmanical norms, but give expression to local understandings and beliefs.

This neat collaboration between vernacular and Sanskritic religion in the *sthalamāhātmyas* is, however, not at all acknowledged in the major works *on* the Varadarāja temple. For, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, in spite of the importance attached to the lizards by the temple visitors, and in spite of the importance attached to the "golden lizards" by the temple administration (if only because of the income generated by the tickets allowing access to them), academic descriptions of the Varadarāja temple mostly ignore the lizards. Here it is important to note that both authors of standard works on this temple, K. V. Raman and R. Varada Tatacharya, are Vaiṣṇava Brahmins, albeit of different sectarian affiliation. Their personal affiliation to "elite religion" might be the reason why they both did not acknowledge the importance (or even existence) of the lizards, in spite of their popularity among temple visitors. This attitude is also prevalent among the male Brahmin priests of the temple, who unanimously and somewhat dismissively claim that they do not touch the lizards, as they "have access to Perumāḷ [= the main deity] himself."[54] Implied here is that for them, touching the lizards is secondary to and not as efficacious as touching the main deity of the temple, which is the prerogative of the initiated male members of six priestly families hereditarily affiliated to the

53 "Sanskrit Hinduism" refers to those forms of Hinduism which mainly refer to normative religious texts in Sanskrit. In the context of South Indian temple Hinduism, these are the *āgama* or *saṃhitā* texts, or the handbooks (*prayogas* and *paddhatis*) based on these *āgamas*.

54 Murli Bhaṭṭar, interview, March 9, 2017.

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Varadarāja temple (Hüsken 2010). In contrast, most wives of these priests use every opportunity to touch the lizards, as they assured me in several interviews. Their practice reflects the ritual instructions we find in the KM(V), where the temple visitors are advised to have *darśana* of the main deity first, and then touch the lizards while circumambulating the temple's *garbhagṛha* (KM(V) 31.88–92). At the same time, this also attests to the identification of women—and evidently even women from Brahmin temple priests' families—with "low," vernacular, and folk religion, both in theory and in practice (see also Hüsken 2013).

Yet importantly, the Sanskrit texts *do* incorporate the lizards' stories, as evidence of how the success of a specific and popular religiously significant place is able to impact the textual narratives, rather than the other way around. There is evidence that the lizards' narrative entered the main corpus of the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* later, as an "appendix." In this case, the popularity of the lizards as efficacious salvific place not only preceded, but even effected the inclusion of its narrative into the Sanskrit text which therefore constitute unique texts, which give us access to local lived religion. The *sthalamāhātmyas* are a uniquely fertile ground for research on Hinduism, as they give access to the complex relationship between textual precept and actual practice, between local ("folk") and elite religiosity, between oral, written and performative transmission, and consequently, enable us to understand the great variety of Hindu traditions, past and present.

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Appendix I

Diplomatic transcript of the thirty-first chapter of the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(V)), based on the printed edition of 1906 (*Kāñcīmāhātmyaṃ Brahmāṇḍapurāṇāntargataṃ*. Ed. by P.B. Anantācārya. Kāñcīpuram: Sudarśana Press, 1906), proofread and corrected by Marija Grujovska and Malini Ambach.

अथ एकत्रिंशोध्यायः

नारदः

पुरा देवसभामध्ये महेन्द्रः पाकशासनः ।
आसीत्सिम्हासने दिव्ये समासीनस्सुरैस्सह ॥ १ ॥
तदा केचिन्महाप्रज्ञा ब्राह्मणा ब्रह्मवित्तमाः ।
आजग्मुस्सहिता द्रष्टुं कदाचित्पाकशासनम् ॥ २ ॥
अगस्त्यो भगवानत्रिर्मृकण्डुर्गौतमो महान् ।
भार्गवश्च्यवनो विद्वान्तथान्ये च महार्षयः ॥ ३ ॥
तानागतान्समुद्वीक्ष्य गुरुणा सह देवराट् ।
पूजयित्वा यथान्यायं पप्रच्छ कुशलं द्विजान् ॥ ४ ॥
तैश्चापि पृष्टः कुशलं निवेद्य स्वं पुरन्दरः ।
ततः पप्रच्छ धर्मार्थनिश्चयं द्विजसत्तमान् ॥ ५ ॥
चतुर्णामाश्रमाणां हि गरीयान्क उदाहृतः ।
तं आश्रमं पुण्यतमं सुनयः प्रब्रुवन्तु मे ॥ ६ ॥
एवमिन्द्रेण संपृष्टास्तमूचुर्मुनिपुंगवाः ।
आश्रमाणां हि सर्वेषां ज्यायानेव गृहाश्रमः ॥ ७ ॥
नतदृशोस्ति लोकेन्यो ह्याश्रमो धर्मसाधनः ।

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ब्रुवन्ति मुनयस्सर्वे श्रेष्टं गार्हस्थ्यमाश्रमम् ॥ ८ ॥
तस्मात्तमेव देवेन्द्र श्रेष्टं विद्याद्गृहाश्रमम् ।
इति तेशु ब्रुवाणेषु वाक्पतिर्विस्मयान्वितः ॥ ९ ॥
तत्र धिक्कृत्य तान्विप्रानुवाच वचनं नृप ।
गरीयान्ब्रह्मचर्याख्यः परमः प्रथमाश्रमः ॥ १० ॥
तं उल्लंघ्य कथं ब्रूत यूथं श्रेष्ठं गृहाश्रमम् ।
अनालोच्यैव शास्त्रार्थान्सर्वे मूढधियो यथा ॥ ११ ॥
इत्युक्तवन्तन्धिषणं ते समीक्ष्याथगर्वितम् ।
शेपुः प्रकुपितास्सद्यस्तमनर्थार्थवादिनम् ॥ १२ ॥
यस्मात्त्वमवलेपेन सर्वान्नस्सत्यवादिनः ।
अधिक्षिपसि मन्दात्मम्हीनार्थं स्वर्थवद्ब्रुवन् ॥ १३ ॥
तस्मातितः प्रपतितो भूम्यां दारिद्र्यपीडितः ।
सर्वदुःखसमायुक्तो भवरोगैः प्रपीडितः ॥ १४ ॥
इति शप्त्वा गुरुं सर्वे प्रजग्मुस्ते यथागतम् ।
ततश्शप्तो गुरुर्विप्रैस्तत्क्षणान्न्यपतत्क्षितौ ॥ १५ ॥
कस्मिंश्चिन्नर्मदातीरग्रामे ब्राह्मणमन्दिरे ।
उंछवृत्तेर्दरिद्रस्य जज्ञे तस्य सुतो नृप ॥ १६ ॥
जातमात्रे तु जननी जगाम यमसादनम् ।
क्लेशेन महता पित्रा रक्षितोत्यन्तबालकः ॥ १७ ॥
ततस्संवत्सरे पूर्णे मृतो भूज्जनकोपि च ।
रुदतो बालकस्यास्य नैव संबधिबांधवाः ॥ १८ ॥
यया कयाचित्कृपया रक्षितो बालकस्तथा ।
मृदुशय्या न तस्यासीन्न च दंशनिवारकाः ॥ १९ ॥
एवं संवर्धितो बाल्ये शयानो यत्र कुत्रचित् ।
उपनीतश्च कृपया केनचिद्ब्राह्मणेन सः ॥ २० ॥
ततस्तु यौवनं प्राप्य कुचेलः कुत्सिताशनः ।
बभुव भृशनिर्वेदमापन्नोत्यन्तदुर्भगः ॥ २१ ॥
पीडितो व्याधिभिर्नित्यं मनोरथशताकुलः ।
स कदाचिन्नृपश्रेष्ठ तपसे कृतनिश्चयः ॥ २२ ॥

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ययौ भागीरथीतीरं पुण्यवृक्षलतायुतम् ।
तत्रोपविष्टमद्राक्षीद्भरद्वाजं महामुनिं ॥ २३ ॥
तं प्रणम्य महाभागं ब्राह्मणो वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।
केनाहमस्मि विप्रेंद्र दारिद्रः पापकर्मणा ॥ २४ ॥
मातापितृभ्यां हीनश्च बाल्यादारभ्य दुःखितः ।
निश्श्रीतो भ्रष्टसंकल्पः कदन्नादश्च केवलम् ॥ २५ ॥
यद्यहं सुखमुत्सृज्य भौमं दुःखसमन्वितम् ।
इच्छामि वा तपः कर्तुं परमं विष्णुतुष्टिदम् ॥ २६ ॥
तत्र दुर्निग्रहं चित्तं चंचलं मे भवत्यलम् ।
तस्मादिह पराभ्याम् मां सुखाभ्यां हीनमागतम् ॥ २७ ॥
त्रातुमर्हसि विप्रेंद्र यथाहं मुक्तिमाप्नुयाम् ।
इति तस्य वचश्श्रुत्वा भरद्वाजो महामनाः ॥ २८ ॥
ध्यात्वा मुहूर्तं तपसा तं विज्ञाय बृहस्पतिम् ।
शप्तं महर्षिभिः पूर्वं एवं भूतं सुदुर्भगम् ॥ २९ ॥
तस्य निष्कृतिमन्विच्छन्नुवाच द्विजपुंगवः ।
श्रृणु विप्र प्रवक्ष्यामि वचस्तव हितं शुभं ॥ ३० ॥
अस्ति दक्षिणतः क्षेत्रमितः क्रोशसहस्रके ।
देशे सत्यव्रतं नाम विष्णुप्रीतिकरं परम् ॥ ३१ ॥
तत्रास्ति हस्तिशैलाख्यो भूधरः पुण्यवर्धनः ।
तस्मिन्वसति देवेशो वरदस्सर्वदेहिनाम् ॥ ३२ ॥
तस्य दर्शनमात्रेन मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिशैः ।
नराः पातकिनो वापि तिर्यं चोपि कुयोनिजाः ॥ ३३ ॥
तस्मात्त्वं तत्र गत्वाशु तपश्चर हरेः प्रियम् ।
तपसा वरदस्तुष्टः प्रसन्नस्ते भवेद्ध्रुवम् ॥ ३४ ॥
अत्रैवोदाहरिष्यामि प्रत्ययार्थं तवानघ ।
तच्छृणु त्वमुपाख्यानं पल्लिकामोक्षणं द्विज ॥ ३५ ॥
कश्चितासीत्कुरुक्षेत्रे ब्राह्मणो वेदपारगः ।
उपमन्युरिति ख्यातस्तपस्वी विजितेंद्रियः ॥ ३६ ॥
विष्णुभक्तो जितक्रोधः प्रशांतात्मदृढव्रतः ।

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तस्यासील्लक्षणा नाम भार्या रूपगुणान्विता ॥ ३७ ॥
पतिव्रता महाभागा विष्णुव्रतपरायणा ।
तया सभार्यया सार्धं सततं विष्णुमर्चयन् ॥ ३८ ॥
वर्तयन्नुंछवृत्त्यैव कुर्वन्निषवणं द्विजः ।
पूजयन्नतिथीन्नित्यं पितृन्देवांश्च तर्पयन् ॥ ३९ ॥
तस्यैवं वर्तमानस्य ब्राह्मणस्य महात्मनः ।
सुषुवे तनयं पत्नी लक्षणा लक्षणैर्युतम् ॥ ४० ॥
ततः कदाचिद्विप्रेंद्रः पत्न्या सह सुतेन च ।
तीर्थयात्रापरो भूमिमुपमन्युश्चचार ह ॥ ४१ ॥
तत्र तत्र च तीर्थेषु ह्रदेषु च नदीषु च ।
स्नात्वा लक्षणया सार्धं तर्पयंश्च पितृन्द्विजः ॥ ४२ ॥
क्षेत्रेषु च सुपुण्येशु पश्यन्विष्णुं रमापतिम् ।
उंछवृत्त्यैव सततमतिथींश्चापि पूजयन् ॥ ४३ ॥
स तु गोदावरीतीरमाययौ सह भार्यया ।
तत्रैकस्मिन्दिने मार्गे नद्यास्तिरे वने शुभे ॥ ४४ ॥
कस्मिंचिदाह्निकं कर्तुमवसद्ब्राह्मणोत्तमः ।
तत्र स्नात्वा स गौतम्यां मध्याह्ने द्विजसत्तमः ॥ ४५ ॥
सन्तर्प्य च पितृन्देवान्पूजयामास केशवम् ।
ततस्तत्र चरुं कृत्वा तण्डुलैः पंचमुष्टिभिः ॥ ४६ ॥
सिलोंछवृत्त्योपहृतैस्तत्र लब्धैश्च तद्दिने ।
वैश्वदेववलिं चक्रे निवेद्यान्नं तु विष्णवे ॥ ४७ ॥
शेषमन्नं सुपूतं तच्चक्रे भागद्वयं तथा ।
भागमेकं तु शिशवे पुत्रायादाद्धरिं स्मरन् ॥ ४८ ॥
द्वितीयं भागमतनोत्स्वपत्न्याश्चात्मनोपि च ।
एवं विभज्य विधिवदन्न विप्रवरस्तदा ॥ ४९ ॥
प्रथमं भोजयामास वालं पुत्रं बुभुक्षितम् ।
स्वयं चापि यदा भोक्तुमैच्छदन्नं द्विजोत्तमः ॥ ५० ॥
तदैवाभ्याययौ तत्र विप्रः कश्चिद्बुभुक्षितः ।
सौभ्ययाचत विप्रेंद्रमन्नं देहीति याचकः ॥ ५१ ॥

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तस्मै स प्रददावन्नं स्वभोज्यमपि हृष्टधीः ।
स तु भुक्त्वान्नमतिथिर्नालमित्यब्रवीत्पुनः ॥ ५२ ॥
ततस्स्वभोज्यमन्नं च लक्षणापि ददौ मुदा ।
स तु भुक्त्वा द्वयोरन्नं प्रययावतिथिर्द्विजः ॥ ५३ ॥
उपमन्युस्तदा प्राप्तकोटियज्ञफलो द्विजः
मुमोद सहितः पत्न्या भृशमन्नप्रदानतः ॥ ५४ ॥
ततस्तद्गृह्य चोच्छिष्टं पत्रं भुक्तस्य चातिथेः ।
चिक्षेप गर्ते कस्मिंश्चिल्लतागुल्मसमावृते ॥ ५५ ॥
क्षिप्तमात्रे तदोच्छिष्टे ब्राह्मणेनोपमन्युना ।
पतिता बिन्दवो मूर्ध्नि तत्र पल्लिकयोर्बिले ॥ ५६ ॥
चिरं निवसतोः पापात्पल्लिकारूपिणोर्द्वयोः ।
पतिताद्ब्राह्मणोच्छिष्टात्पल्लिकायुगळस्य तु ॥ ५७ ॥
बभूव तत्क्षणादेव शिरोमात्रं तु कांचनम् ।
अभूत्पूर्वस्मृतिश्चापि तयोस्तत्र कुजन्मनोः ॥ ५८ ॥
पल्ली च पल्लिका चोभौ दंपती पापकर्मिणौ ।
वाचा चुक्रोशतुर्दीनौ मानुष्या तं द्विजोत्तमम् ॥ ५९ ॥
स्मृत्वा पूर्वकृतं पापं त्राहि त्राहीति दुःखितौ ।
क्रोशन्तं पल्लिकायुग्ममीक्ष्य कांचनमस्तकम् ॥ ६० ॥
पप्रच्छ कृपया विप्रः कौ युवामिति विस्मितः ।
तमुवाच तदा पल्ली स्मरन्दुष्कृतमात्मनः ॥ ६१ ॥
अहं नृपसूतः पूर्वमासं जन्मनि सप्तमे ।
अयोध्याधिपतेः पुत्रः सगरस्य महात्मनः ॥ ६२ ॥
असमंज इति ख्यातो बालघ्नः पापकर्मकृत् ।
हत्वा सहस्रशो बालान्सरय्वाः प्राक्षिपंजले ॥ ६३ ॥
तदा मां पापिनं दृष्ट्वा राजा जनहितेच्छया ।
सभार्यमनयद्रोषात्सर्वस्वं गृह्य काननम् ॥ ६४ ॥
ततोहं भार्यया सार्धं वनेषु भृशदारुणः ।
हत्वा मृगान्पक्षिणश्च भक्षयन्नचरं द्विज ॥ ६५ ॥
ततः कदाचित्कांतारे व्याघ्रेणावां च घातितौ ।

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श्वानयोनिमनुप्राप्ता वेनसः पूर्वसंचितात् ॥ ६६ ॥
मार्जारिं सौकरीं चापि प्राप्य योनिं च नाकुलीम् ।
षष्टे च जन्मनि पुनः श्वानौ भूत्वा सुदुःखितौ ॥ ६७ ॥
अस्मिन्नेव वने पूर्वं शशं दृष्ट्वा बुभुक्षितौ ।
भक्षार्थमनुधावन्तावज्ञानात्पतिताविह ॥ ६८ ॥
कूपेस्मिन्मरणं लब्ध्वा सम्प्राप्तौ पल्लिकातनुम् ।
तव सन्दर्शनादद्य पूर्वस्मृतिरभूच्च नौ ॥ ६९ ॥
शिरश्च कांचनमभूदावयोस्त्वत्करोदकात् ।
तस्मान्नावुद्धरक्षिप्रं त्वामेव शरणम्गतौ ॥ ७० ॥
इति तद्दुष्कृतम्श्रुत्वा तावप्युद्वीक्ष्य दुःखितौ ।
ब्राह्मणः कृपयाविष्टस्समुद्धर्तुमियेष ह ॥ ७१ ॥
ततो वस्त्रेण संगृह्य पल्लिकामिधुनं द्विजः ।
पत्न्या पुत्रेण सहितस्तीर्थयात्रां चकार ह ॥ ७२ ॥
तत्र तत्र च तीर्थेषु स्नाप्य पल्लिद्वयं द्विजः ।
क्षेत्राणि दर्शयामास मोक्षार्थं पल्लिकातनोः ॥ ७३ ॥
पुनर्वाराणसीं गत्वा हरिद्वारं च पुष्करम् ।
प्रयागं नैमिशं चापि वृषभाद्रिमहोबलम् ॥ ७४ ॥
सिम्हाद्रिमथ गोकर्णं श्रीशैलं कौर्ममुत्तमम् ।
एतान्यन्यानि पुण्यानि क्षेत्राणि विचचार ह ॥ ७५ ॥
पल्लीयुग्मस्य मोक्षार्थमेवं विचरतस्तदा ।
उपमन्योर्द्विजेन्द्रस्य महान्कालो बभूव ह ॥ ७६ ॥
नैव चासीत्तयोर्मोक्षः क्षेत्रेषु सकलेष्वपि ।
ततः कदाचिद्विप्रेन्द्रः प्रभासन्तीर्थमाययौ ॥ ७७ ॥
तपस्यंतम्मुनिं तत्र मार्कण्डेयं ददर्श च ।
तं प्रणम्य द्विजश्रेष्ठमुपमन्युरुवाच ह ॥ ७८ ॥
मार्कण्डेय महाप्रज्ञ ममोपायं वदानघ ।
पल्लियुग्ममिदं ब्रह्मन्मामेव शरणं गतम् ॥ ७९ ॥
तस्मादेतस्य मोक्षार्थमहं यामि क्वाधुना ।
इति तस्य वचश्श्रुत्वा मृकण्डुतनयोब्रवीत् ॥ ८० ॥

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कांची पुण्यतमा लोके कलिकल्मषनाशिनी ।
सैव मुक्तिप्रदा नृणाम्महापातकिनामपि ॥ ८१ ॥
तत्रानन्तसरो नाम तीर्थमस्ति सुपवनम् ।
तत्र स्नापय गत्वा त्वमेतौ गृह्य कुयोनिजौ ॥ ८२ ॥
दर्शयस्व च देवेशं वरदं हस्तिशैलगम् ।
दर्शनादेतयोर्मुक्तिर्भविष्यति न संशयः ॥ ८३ ॥
इति तस्य वचश्श्रुत्वा मार्कण्डेयस्य धीमतः ।
उपमन्युर्जगामाशु काम्चीं संगृह्य तावुभौ ॥ ८४ ॥
तत्रानन्तसरस्तोये स्नापयित्वा विधानतः ।
दर्शयामास देवेशं वरदं हस्तिशैलगम् ॥ ८५ ॥
तौ चापि दृष्ट्वा देवेशं दम्पती मुक्तकिल्बिषौ ।
उत्सृज्य स्वर्गतौ विप्र कुत्सीतां पल्लिकातनुं ॥ ८६ ॥
तयोस्स्वर्गतयोस्तत्र दम्पत्योस्तत्कळेवरौ ।
तत्रैव पल्लिकाकारौ स्थितौ कांचनमस्तकौ ॥ ८७ ॥
तदोपमन्युर्हृष्टात्मा ववन्दे वरदं हरिम् ।
सहितः पुत्रपत्नीभ्यां तुष्टाव च जगत्पतिम् ॥ ८८ ॥
तमुवाच तदा देवो वरदो भक्तवत्सलः ।
उपमन्यो महाप्रज्ञ धन्यम्त्वमसि सुव्रत ॥ ८९ ॥
यन्मां दर्शयता चात्र दंपती उद्धृतौ त्वया ।
तयोः कळेवरावेतावत्रैव स्वर्णमस्तकौ ॥ ९० ॥
तिष्ठेतां हस्तिशैलाग्रे तव च ख्यातिकारणात् ।
ये चात्र मनुजास्सम्यक्मां दृष्ट्वा मत्प्रदक्षिणे ॥ ९१ ॥
स्पृशन्ति पल्लिकायुग्मं नीरोगास्ते भवंत्यलम् ।
इति दत्वा वरं तस्मै ब्राह्मणायोपमन्यवे ॥ ९२ ॥
श्रियं चैवाचलां दत्वा ततश्चांतर्हितो हरिः ।
उपमन्युः श्रियं लब्ध्वा शाश्वतीं हृष्टमानसः ॥ ९३ ॥
सहितः पुत्रपौत्रैश्च मुमुदे शाश्वतीस्समाः ।
तस्मात्त्वमपि विप्रेन्द्र गच्छ शीघ्रमितश्शुभाम् ॥ ९४ ॥
तत्र दृष्ट्वा तु वरदं पापान्मुक्तो भविष्यसि ।

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कुचेलस्त्वेव मुक्तस्तु भरद्वाजेन धीमता ॥ ९५ ॥
जगाम कांचीं वेगेन वरदं द्रष्टुमुत्सुकः ।
तत्रानन्तसरस्तिरे चकार तप उत्तमम् ॥ ९६ ॥
देवं च वरदं विप्रो ददर्शाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।
ततो देवाज्ञया तत्र पूजयन्द्वापरे युगे ॥ ९७ ॥
वरदं सततं भक्त्या जगाम परमां गतिं ।
इति श्रीब्रह्माण्डपुराणे काञ्चीमाहात्म्ये एकत्रिंशोध्यायः

Appendix II

Diplomatic transcript of the third chapter of the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV), based on the printed edition of 1968 (*Śrīkāmākṣīvilāsaḥ*. Baṅgalūru: Bhāratalakṣmī Mudraṇālayam, 1968), corrected and proofread by Malini Ambach.

श्री कामाक्षीविलासः
तृतीयाध्यायप्रारम्भः

पुण्यकोटिविमानाङ्कं तत्वसोपानभूषितम् ।
नारसिंहाधिष्ठितगुहं हस्तिशैलं नमाम्यहम् ॥ १ ॥
इति स्तुत्वा नमस्कृत्य चाथ वारणशैलकम् ।
राजानं सुरथं दृष्ट्वा वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ २ ॥
मार्कण्डेय उवाच
हस्तिशैलप्रभावः
अथ तत्र नृपश्रेष्ठ हरिक्षेत्रधरातले ।
पाञ्चालिकातीर्थराजवाते चांशद्वयात्मके ॥ ३ ॥
हस्तिशैलो महापुण्यो वर्तते पर्वतोत्तमः ।
गजाभिधेयकश्शैलो हरिक्षेत्रस्य भूषणम् ॥ ४ ॥
पुण्यकोट्यां निवासेन पुण्यकोटिरिति श्रुतः ।
पुरा महेन्द्रशापेन पर्वतो ऽभूद्गजोत्तमः ॥ ५ ॥
तदहं सम्प्रवक्ष्यामि पुरावृत्तं चरित्रकम् ।

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तस्य श्रवणमात्रेण सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ ६ ॥
पुरा सरस्वती लोके विद्यानां मूलकारणात् ।
स्वयं लोके वरा चेति हृदि कृत्वा वरोन्मदात् ॥ ७ ॥
तथा लक्ष्मीर्हरेः पत्नी लोकानां भाग्यकारणात् ।
स्वयं लोके वरा चेति हृदि कृत्वा वरोन्मदात् ॥ ८ ॥
परस्परविवादात्ते स्वस्वोत्कर्षनिमित्ततः ।
स्वर्गलोकं तदा गत्वा चावयोः का वरा त्विति ॥ ९ ॥
यथार्थं ब्रूयतां शक्र निष्पक्षादावयोरपि ।
इति पप्रच्छतुश्शक्रं ततश्श्रीर्भारती च ते ॥ १० ॥
तदा सुराधिपो वज्री तयोर्लक्ष्मीर्विशिष्यते ।
वरा लक्ष्मीर्भाग्यमूला लोकानां च तथा विधेः ॥ ११ ॥
जननी विष्णुपत्नीत्वात्तव श्वश्रूस्सरस्वती ।
लक्ष्मीर्वरेति तत्त्वेन भारती तेन चोदिता ॥ १२ ॥
ततस्तयोस्तु वाणी तमशपत्पक्षपाततः ।
स्वश्रियस्स्थापनार्थाय परां मत्वा तु पद्मजाम् ॥ १३ ॥
अन्यायेनोक्तवान्यस्मात्तस्मान्न्यायविवर्जितः ।
अहंकारी श्रियोन्मत्तो दुष्टात्मा मूढधीर्वृषा ॥ १४ ॥
इति संचिन्त्य सा वाणी शशापेन्द्रं गजाकृतिम् ।
ततो लक्ष्मीर्महेन्द्राय कृपया शापमुक्तये ॥ १५ ॥
दृष्ट्वा न्यायाधिपं शक्रमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।

लक्ष्मीरुवाच

देवेन्द्र श्रुणु मद्वाक्यं तव शापविमुक्तये ॥ १६ ॥
भुलोके दण्डकारण्यं गत्वा सिंहाचलोत्तमे ।
तत्र प्रह्लादको नाम बालो भागवतोत्तमः ॥ १७ ॥
अस्ति तत्र तु तं प्राप्य तस्य वक्त्रारविन्दतः ।
शीघ्रसिद्धिप्रदं मन्त्रं द्वात्रिंशद्वर्णसंयुतम् ॥ १८ ॥
संगृह्य मन्त्रराजानं नारसिंहमहामनुम् ।
तदेकध्यानतश्शक्र दिव्यज्ञानं प्रजायते ॥ १९ ॥
तद्ज्ञानकुशलत्वं हि हरिक्षेत्रप्रवेशदम् ।

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अवशाच्च भवेत्तत्र मन्नामध्यानमुत्तमम् ॥ २० ॥
तेनैव मत्प्रियस्सिंहस्तव शापं विमोक्ष्यति ।
तस्मात्कारुण्यतः प्रोक्तमविळम्बेन तत्कुरु ॥ २१ ॥
इत्येवमुक्त्वा शक्राय रमा मङ्गळदेवता ।
सह वाण्या महलक्ष्मीर्वादाद्ब्रह्मपुरीं गता ॥ २२ ॥
ततश्चेन्द्रो गजो भूत्वा महालक्ष्मीवचोनुगः ।
तदा प्रह्लादकं प्राप्य तस्य वक्त्रारविन्दतः ॥ २३ ॥
संगृह्य मन्त्रराजानं तदेकध्यानपूर्वकम् ।
काञ्चीपुर्यां हरिक्षेत्रं प्रविवेश गजाकृतिः ॥ २४ ॥
महेन्द्रहृङ्गतो विष्णुर्ध्यानरूपो नृसिंहकः ।
गजदेहगतं शक्रं बध्वा हस्ताम्बुजैर्हरिः ॥ २५ ॥
तन्नागहृदयं भित्वा बहिरेत्य सुराधिपम् ।
तद्गजं वीक्ष्य शैलाभं कृत्वा तत्पुण्यभूतले ॥ २६ ॥
निवासकाम्यया सिंहः पुनश्शैलोदरं विशन् ।
बिम्बाकृतिस्ततो भूत्वा प्रबभौ योगवेषतः ॥ २७ ॥
ततश्चेन्द्रस्सुरपतिस्समभ्यर्च्य मृगेश्वरम् ।
स्वलोकाय ततश्चक्रो गन्तु निश्चित्य संस्थितः ॥ २८ ॥
ततश्शैलोत्तमे विप्रौ बालकौ दिव्यसुन्दरौ ।
दृष्ट्वा विस्मयतश्शक्रो वचनं चेदमब्रवीत् ॥ २९ ॥

वरदराजदेवालयस्थफल्लियुग्मकथारम्भः

इन्द्र उवाच

वदतां मे युवां विप्रबालकौ वेदनिर्भरौ ।
यत्राश्रमस्तु वामत्र किमर्थं चागतौ युवाम् ॥ ३० ॥
कदा शैलसमारूढौ तन्मे ब्रूतं द्विजोत्तमौ ।

विप्रावूचतुः

शृङ्गिवेरसुतौ विप्रौ हेमशुक्लाभिधानकौ ॥ ३१ ॥
शाण्डिल्यगोत्रसंजातौ सूत्रे वैखानसाह्वयौ ।
तत्सूत्रशास्त्रे निपुणौ बालकौ ब्रह्मचागिणौ ॥ ३२ ॥
गौतमस्य तु सच्छिष्यौ नौ गुरुर्विष्णुभक्तिमान् ।

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नौ गुरुर्विष्णुपूजार्थमावां भद्राचलं समम् ॥ ३३ ॥
आपूर्य कुम्भमादाय कोङ्कणस्याश्रमे शुभे ।
अनाच्छादनतस्स्थाप्य समिदर्थं द्विजद्रुमम् ॥ ३४ ॥
आरुह्य समिदं तत्र गृहीत्वा समुपागतौ ।
तत्कुम्भतीर्थे त्ववशान्न्यपतत्कृशफल्लिकः ॥ ३५ ॥
तं दृष्ट्वा पाददृक्कोपादनाच्छादनतश्च नौ ।
अशपत्फल्लिरूपेण तेनावां फल्लिरूपकौ ॥ ३६ ॥
तद्वृक्षसंस्थितौ पश्चात्तव तुण्डप्रचेष्टया ।
छिन्नवृक्षान्निपतितौ तव पृष्ठे गजात्मनः ॥ ३७ ॥
आवान्तु धृत्वा दैवात्त्वं हरिक्षेत्रमवीविशः ।
नौ शापमुक्तिरभवदस्य क्षेत्रस्य वैभवात् ॥ ३८ ॥
इत्येवमुक्त्वा विप्रेन्द्रौ प्रणम्य शिरसा हरिम् ।
विहाय फल्लिरूपं तौ यथा स्वभवनं गतौ ॥ ३९ ॥
एवमाकर्ण्य देवेन्द्रो हस्ताभ्यां फल्लियुग्मकम् ।
धृत्वा दृष्ट्वा तु तच्छैलं विप्रयोरुपकारकम् ॥ ४० ॥
मुदा शैलाय देवेन्द्रो दत्तवान्वरमुत्तमम् ।
एकादश्यामहोरात्रं विष्णोस्संकीर्तनेन च ॥ ४१ ॥
यत्फलं तत्फलं नृणां हस्तिशैलस्य दर्शनात् ।
इति दत्वा वरं शक्रो गतस्स्वभवनं मुदा ॥ ४२ ॥
स्वदेवतायास्सदने कृत्वा तत्फल्लिलांछनम् ।
स्वपीठे तु यथा पूर्वं तदा देवपतिर्बभौ ॥ ४३ ॥
काञ्च्यां हस्तिगिरिस्तत्र हरिक्षेत्रे तदादितः ।
आस्ते तत्पर्वतं दृष्ट्वा बहवो मोक्षकांक्षिणः ॥ ४४ ॥
महिम्ना तस्य शैलस्य गतास्ते वैष्णवं पदम् ।

गणुब्राह्मणोपाख्यानम्

तेषु कश्चित्पुरा विप्रस्सरयूतीरमन्दिरः ॥ ४५ ॥
भारद्वाजकुलोद्भूतश्शुक्लवेदी महीसुरः ।
विप्रो गणुरिति ख्यातः पापी कर्मविवर्जितः ॥ ४६ ॥
जीवितश्चोरकृत्येन शुद्धवेषधरो बहिः ।

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ऊर्ध्वपुण्ड्रवनाक्षाढ्यो वेदविद्याविशारदः ॥ ४७ ॥
धनुर्विद्यासु निरतः प्रत्यहं स नरो द्विजः ।
यात्रापदे सदा स्थित्वा स्वयं यात्रार्थवेषतः ॥ ४८ ॥
यात्रार्थं ये समायान्ति स तैर्युक्तश्शठाग्रणिः ।
शैलं वनं दुर्गमं वा वीक्ष्य कार्मुकविद्यया ॥ ४९ ॥
हत्वा तान्सर्ववस्तूनि हृत्वा दस्युपथेन च ।
गृहं गत्वा जीवतीत्थं प्रत्यहं स नरः क्रमात् ॥ ५० ॥
कदाचित्स नरस्तत्र निकृत्या नैमिशे वने ।
वीरेण वद्धः केनापि छिन्नयज्ञोपवीतकः ॥ ५१ ॥
क्षुरप्रेणालूनशिखो नष्टमानोन्नतिर्द्विजः ।
याम्यां दिशं प्रयाहीति तेनाबध्य विसर्जितः ॥ ५२ ॥
यात्राकाले स वै विप्रस्तत्कोलाख्ये पुरे शुभे ।
समागतो हस्तिशैलं दृष्ट्वा सद्यो मृतिं गतः ॥ ५३ ॥
ततो वारणशैलस्य दर्शनात्पापवर्जितः ।
विष्णुदूतैर्विमानेन नीतो विष्णुपदं गतः ॥ ५४ ॥
तस्माद्वारणशैलो ऽसौ पुण्यराशिर्नृपोत्तम ।
वर्तते च हरिक्षेत्रे दर्शनान्मुक्तिदायकः ॥ ५५ ॥
एतद्रहस्यमाख्यातं हस्तिशैलप्रभावयुक् ।
यः पठेच्छृणुयान्नित्यमिममध्यायमादरात् ॥ ५६ ॥
दर्शनाद्धस्तिशैलस्य यत्फलं तत्फलं लभेत् ॥

इति श्री मार्कण्डेयपुराणे श्रीविद्याखण्डे कामाक्षीविलासे हस्तिगिरिप्रभावो नाम तृटीयो ऽध्यायः ॥

Appendix III

Diplomatic transcript of a scan of the *Taṅkappallikaḷ mahātmiyam* (TPM), British Library, shelve mark pTam.B.S931 (transcript by Ramya R.)

காஞ்சிபுரம்
ஸ்ரீ தேவராஜஸ்வாமி தேவஸ்தானம்
தங்கப்பல்லிகள் மஹாத்மியம்.

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இயற்றியது'
T.K சுந்தரவரதாசாரியர்
திருவாபரண மிராசுதார்
ஸ்ரீதேவராஜஸ்வாமி தேவஸ்தானம்
&
ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணா எலிமெண்டரி பாடசாலை ஸ்தாபகர், மானேஜர்.

முதல் பதிப்பு 1,000 காபிகள்.
டவுன் பிரஸ், காஞ்சிபுரம்.

விலை 0-2-6 [ரிஜிஸ்டர்ட்

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ஆசாரியன் திருவடிகளை யடைந்த
எனது பௌத்திரி ராஜம்
எனது பௌத்திரன்
கலியாணகோடி சௌந்தரராஜன்
இவர்களிட கியாபகார்த்தமாய் இப்புத்தகம்
வரையப்பட்டது.

[new page]

முகவுரை.

கஇதிப்ரம்மணோநாம - தேநதத்ராஞ்சிதோஹரி: தஸ்மாத், காஞ்சீ இதி, விக்யாதா - புரீபுண்ய விவர்த்தநீ, என்றபடி க: என்பது ப்ரம்மாவினுடைய நாமம். அவராலே இந்த நகரத்திலே பகவான் ஆராதிதராகையாலே இந்த நகரத்துக்கு காஞ்சி என்கிற பேர், ப்ரஸித்தமாயிற்று என்று ப்ரம்ம புராணம், ஸ்ரீ ஹஸ்திகிரி மஹாத்யம் ப்ரதம, அத்யாயத்தில் கூறப்பட்டிருக்கிற படியால், காஞ்சிமாநகர் மிகவும் புனிதமான க்ஷேத்ரம். நம் தாய் நாடாகிய இந்தியாவின் பலபாகங்களிலிருந்து, பிரதிதினமும் வரும் யாத்ரீகர்கள் தங்கப்பல்லிகளின் மஹாத்மியத்தை தெரிந்துக் கொள்ள, நிறம்ப ஆவல் படுவதால், அவர்களுடைய ஆவலைத் தணிக்க, அதை இச் சிறு புத்தக வாயிலாக வெளியிடத் துணிந்தேன். இப் புத்தகத்தில் அனேக பிழைகளிருக்கக் கூடும். அப் பிழைகளை நேயர்கள் கண்டறிந்து எனக்கு எடுத்துக் காட்டக் கோருகிறேன். நிறம்ப விசேஷமானதும் ஆவச்யகமானதுமான சேர்க்கைகள் ஏதாவது கிடைத்து அவைகளை எனக்குத் தெரியப்படுத்தினால், அடுத்த ப்ரசுரத்தில் அவைகளையும் ப்ரசுரிக்கிறேன்.

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இச்சிறு புத்தகத்தின் கிரயத்துகையில் அச்சிட்ட சிலவுகள் போக மிகுதியை இதன் ஆசிரியர் சின்ன காஞ்சிபுரம் செட்டித்தெருவில் ஸ்தாபித்து நடத்திவரும் ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணா எலிமெண்டெரி பாடசாலையின் உபயோகத்திற்கு எடுத்துக் கொள்ளப்படுமாகையால். மஹா ஜனங்கள் இப்புத்தகத்தைக் கண்ணுற்று,

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நிறம்ப விஸ்வாஸத்துடன் ஆதரித்து, வாங்கி, ஷை பாடசாலையை நடைபெறச் செய்யவேணுமாய் நிறம்ப பணிவுடன் கேட்டுக் கொள்ளுகிறேன்.

T.K.S.

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ஸ்ரீ

ஸ்ரீ ப்ரணதார்த்திஹர வரத பரப்ரும்ஹணேநம:
ஸ்ரீமதே வேதாந்த குரவேநம:
ஸ்ரீமதே வேதாந்த ராமானுஜ மஹாதேசிகாய நம:

"அயோத்யா, மதுரா மாயா,
காசீ, காஞ்சீ, அவந்திகா,
புரீ, த்வாரா வதிஸ்சைவ,
ஸப்தயிதேதி மோக்ஷதாயக:."

என்று வழங்கும் புண்ய க்ஷேத்ரங்கள் ஏழில் காஞ்சிமா நகர் ஒன்று. காசியைக்காட்டிலும் காஞ்சி மேன்மைப்பட்டது. இதை தக்ஷிணகாசி என்று சொல்வதும் உண்டு, "நகரேஷு காஞ்சி" என்று மஹாகவிகளாலும் கொண்டாடப்பட்டது. ஸ்ரீவைஷ்ணவர்களால் மண்டப்ரயம் என்று வழங்கப்பட்ட கோயில், திருமலை, பெருமாள் கோயில் என்ற ப்ரபல விஷ்ணு ஸ்தலங்கள் மூன்றில், காஞ்சிமாநகரை பெருமாள் கோயில் என்று அழைப்பதும் உண்டு. இது நிறம்ப புனிதமான க்ஷேத்ரம். இதற்கு அருகாமையில் வேகவதி என்கிற, புண்யநதியும் இரண்டுமைல் களுக்கப்பால்

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க்ஷீரநதியும் (பாலாறு) தென்பாகத்திலிருக்கின்றன. வேகவதிக்கும் க்ஷீரநதிக்கும் மத்தியில் நிறம்ப பெயர் பெற்ற, இரண்டு நன்னீர்த்தடாகங்களும் உண்டு. அவற்றுள் ஒன்று தென்கிழக்கேயும். மற்றொன்று தென்மேற்கேயும் இருக்கின்றன. இந்தப்புண்ய க்ஷேத்ரத்தில். ப்ரம்மாவானவர், பகவானை ஸாக்ஷாத் கரிக்க, அஸ்வமேதயாகம் செய்து, அந்தயாககுண்ட மென்கிற உத்தரவேதிகையிலிருந்து ஸ்ரீ மஹாவிஷ்ணு, வரதனென்றும் விண்ணார் பெருமானான தேவாதி பனென்றும், ஸ்ரீ பேரருளாளனென்றும் திருநாமமுடையராய் புண்யகோடி விமானமத்யங்கதராய் ஸ்ருஷ்டி தண்டத்துடன் ப்ரம்மாவுக்கு சாக்ஷாத்காரமாகி, அவர் கோறிய சிருஷ்டி தண்டத்தைக் கொடுத்தருளினார். அக்காரணம் பற்றி "வரம் தத: இதீதி வரத:" என்றபடி, வரதன் என்ற திருநாமம் உண்டாயிற்றென்றும் சொல்லுவார்கள்.

ஸ்ரீ பேரருளாளன் அத்திகிரியில் புண்ணியகோடி விமானத்தின்கீழ் ஐந்து ப்ரகாரங்களுக்குள்ளிருக்கிறார். முதல் ப்ரகாரத்திற்கு வையமாளிகை என்று பெயர். இந்த வையமாளிகை, சங்கோத்தமாங்கி, சக்ரோத்த மாங்கி என்கிற இரண்டு தேவர்களால் கார்க்கப்படுகிறது. இந்த ப்ரகாரத்தில் ஈசான்ய பாகத்தில்

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கச்சிக்கு வாய்த்தான் மண்டபம் என்கிற திருமண்டபம் ஒன்று இருக்கிறது. இந்த மண்டபத்திற்கு அடுத்த

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வட கிழக்கு பாகத்தில் பல்லி உருவங்கள் இரண்டு தங்கத்தால் செய்யப்பட்டு மரப்பலகையில் சேர்த்து மேலே ஸ்தாபனம் செய்யப்பட்டிருக்கின்றன. இவைகள் வையமாளிகையில் வைக்கப்பட்டிருப்பதால் இவைகளுக்கு வையமாளிகைப்பல்லி என்கிற காரணப்பெயர் உண்டாயிற்று. ஸாதாரணமாக வீட்டிலிருக்கும் பல்லிகள், மேலே விழுந்தால் 1-வது அனுபந்தத்தில் கண்டிருக்கும் தோஷங்கள் உண்டாகின்றன. இந்த பல்லி உருவங்களை எவனொருவன் ஸ்ரீ வரதராஜனை தரிசித்துப் பிறகு, தரிசித்தாலும் அல்லது ஸ்பரிசித்தாலும், அவன் பாபதோஷ, ரோக, சமனங்களையடைந்து சௌக்கியமடைவான். இவைகளை தரிசித்த பிறகு பல்லிகள் மேலே விழுந்தாலுங் கூட. ஒரு க்ஷண நேரம் வையமாளிகைப்பல்லி என்று மனதார ஸ்மரித்தால் அந்த நிமிஷத்தில் அந்த தோஷம் நிவாரணமாய் விடும். இது சூர்ய சந்திராள் உள்ளவரையில் நடைபெறும் என்பதற்கு அத்தாக்ஷியாக, சூர்ய சந்திராளையும் தங்கத்தால் செய்யப்பட்டு அப்பலகையிலேயே ஸ்தாபிதம் செய்யப்பட்டிருக்கிறதை, கண் கூடாகப்பார்க்கலாம். இந்த க்ஷேத்திரம் தோன்றியது முதலாக, நாளது வரையிலும், ப்ரதி தினமும் இந்தியா என்று வழங்கும்
இப்பரத கண்டத்தின் ஒவ்வொரு பாகத்திலிருந்தும், யாத்ரீகர்கள், ஸ்ரீவரதராஜனை தரிசித்துப் பிறகு, இந்த பல்லிகளையும் தரிசித்துப் போகிறார்கள்.

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தங்கப்பல்லி
மஹாத்மிய வரலாறு.

"ப்ரம்மாண்டபுராணே ஸ்ரீகாஞ்சி மஹாத்மியே 31-வது அத்யாயே."

ஸ்வர்க்க லோகம் என்கிற இந்திர லோகத்தில் தேவேந்திரன் தேவர்களும் மஹரிஷிகளுமாய் சேர்ந்த ஸபையில் வீற்றிருந்து, மஹரிஷிகளைப்பார்த்து, தர்ம விஷய ப்ரஸ்னம் பண்ணினார். அதாவது ப்ரம்மசர்ய, க்ருஹஸ்த, வானப்ரஸ்த, ஸந்யாஸமென்று சொல்லப்படுகிற நான்கு ஆஸ்ரமங்களுக்குள்ளே எந்த ஆஸ்ரமம் உத்தமம் என்று கேழ்க்க அந்த மஹரிஷிகளும் க்ரு ஹஸ்தாஸ்ரமமே உத்தமமென்று சொன்னதை ப்ரஹ் பதியானவர் தூஷித்து அதிக்ஷேபித்ததற்காக மஹ ரிஷிகள் அந்த ப்ரஸ்பதியைச் சபித்தார்கள். அந்த சாப விசேஷத்தால் இப்பூலோகத்தில் யானையாக வந்து பிறந்து வாசா மகோசரமான கஷ்டங்மளையனு பவித்து வரும்போது, மஹாபுநித நதியான கங்காதீரத்தில் நிவாஸமாயிருந்த, பரத்வாஜ மஹரிஷியைக்கண்டு சேவித்து தன் துர்த்தசையை அவருக்கு அறிவித்து அது நீங்கும்படியான உபாயத்தை அருளிச்செய்யும்

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[page 7:]
படி ப்ரார்த்தித்தார். அந்த பரத்வாஜ மஹரிஷியும், தன் யோக மஹிமையினால் இந்த யானை ரூபமாயிருப்பவர் ப்ருஹஸ்பதி யென்றறிந்து க்ஷேத்ரோத்தமமான ஸத்யவ்ருத க்ஷேத்திரத்தில் ஹஸ்திகிரியில் ஸர்வாபீஷ்டப்ரதனாய் விளங்கும் ப்ரணதார்த்திஹரன் என்கிற பெருமாளும் அனந்த ஸரஸ் என்கிற திவ்ய புஷ்கரிணியும் உண்டு. அங்கே போய் அனந்த ஸரஸ்ஸில் நீராடி, வரதனை சேவித்து தபஸ்வியாயிருந்தால் தேவப்பெருமாள் அபீஷடங்களைக் கொடுத்தருளுவர், அங்கு போம் என்ன, அந்த தேவாதிராஜன் அபீஷ்ட வரதன் என்பதற்கு உபாக்கியானம் சொல்லும்படி யானை ரூபமாயிருந்த அந்தப்ரஹஸ்பதியானவர் வேண்ட பரத்வாஜர் சொல்லுகிறார்.

"கேளும் ப்ரஹஸ்பதி பகவானே! குருக்ஷேத்ரத்தில் வேதாத்யயன பரனான உபமன்யு என்கிற நாமம் பூண்ட பிராம்மணன் லக்ஷணை என்கிறதன் தர்ம பத்னியுடனும், தன் புருஷப்ரஜையுடனும், உஞ்சவ்ருத்தி பண்ணி, பிரதிதினமும் அதிதிகளை ஆராதித்த வண்ணமாகவே, தீர்த்தயாத்ரையும் பண்ணிக்கொண்டு கடைசியாக கோதாவரி நதி தீரத்துக்கு வந்தார். பிரதி தினமும் செய்துவரும், நியம நிஷ்டை, அனுஷ்டானங்களை, சாங்கோபாங்கமாக நிறம்ப பக்தியுடன் செய்து முடித்தபிறகு, உஞ்சவிருத்தி பண்ணினதில் கிடைத்த அமுதுபடியை தளிகைபண்ணி, அதை பெருமாளுக்கு

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திருவாராதனம் செய்தபிறகு, கண்டருளப்பண்ணி, (நிவேதனம் செய்து), ஒருபாகம் தன் குழந்தைக்கு வைத்துவிட்டு, மிகுதி நின்றதை, இரண்டு சரிபாகங்களாக்கி இருவரும் ஸ்வீகரிக்கப் போகும், ஸமயத்தில் மிகுந்தபசியால்களைத்து, வாட்டமடைந்து, அதிக ஹீனஸ்வரத்துடன் கூடிய ஓர் அதிதி, தன்னை சத்கரிக்கும்படி வேண்ட அந்த உபமன்யு என்கிற பிராம்மணன் தனக்கும் தன் தர்ம்ம பத்னிக்கும் வைத்திருக்கும் இரண்டு பாகங்களையும் அவ்வதிதிக்குக் கொடுத்து அதிதி ஸத்காரம் செய்து, பிறகு பாத்திரத்தை அலம்பி, அலம்பிய ஜலமும் யிரஸாதமுமாய் தாங்களிருவரும் உட்கொண்டு, அதிதியின் உச்சிஷ்டத்தை ஒரு புதரில் வீசி எறிய, அது அங்கிருந்த புத்தில் விஷ, அந்த புற்றிலிருந்து மனிஷ்ய சப்தம் கேட்டது.

உடனே உபமன்யு என்கிற பராம்மணன் அங்கு போய் பார்க்கையில், ஸ்வர்ண மயமான தலையுடன் கூடிய இரண்டு பல்லிகள் வெளியில் வந்து, பிராம்மணோச்சிஷ்டம் மேலே விழுந்ததால் தலைகள் ஸ்வர்ணமயமானது மாத்ர மல்லாமல், பூர்வ ஜென்ம ஸ்மிருதியும் வந்து, ஸ்வாமின், அடியோங்களைக் காப்பாற்றி, உஜ்ஜீவிக்கும்படி அனுக்ரஹிக்க வேணு மென்று நிரம்ப பணிவுடன் பிரார்த்தித்து, தங்களுடைய பூர்வ விருத்தாந்தத்தை ஸ்வாமியின் நியமனமானால், விண்ணப்பித்துக் கொள்கிறோ மென்று

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தெரிவித்தன. உபமன்யு என்கிற பிராம்மணன், தெரிவிக்மும்படி சொல்லியதும், அப்பல்லிகளில் ஒன்று தங்களுடைய பூர்வ ஜன்ம விருத்தாந்தமான ஸூர்ய வம்சத்தரசனான சகரச்சக்ரவர்த்தியின் குமாரர்களில் ஜேஷ்டன் அஸமஞ்ஜஸ னென்பவனும் அவன் பத்னியுமான நாங்களிருவரும் சிசுஹத்தி முதலான, பஹு துஷ்க்ருத்யங்களைப் பண்ணி, அதடியாக, அனேக ஹேயஜன்மங்களை யடைந்து, இப்போது இந்த ஜன்ம மடைந்தோம், எங்களை தேவரீர் கடைத்தேரப் பண்ண வேணுமென்று யிரார்த்திக்க, உபமன்யு வென்கிற பிராம்மணன் க்ருபாவானாய் பல்லிகளிரண்டையும் வஸ்திரத்தாலே யெடுத்துக்கொண்டு, புண்ய க்ஷேத்திரங்கள், புண்ணிய தீர்த்தங்கள் முதலானதுகளுக்குப் போயும் பல்லிகளிரண்டுக்கும் சாபவிமோசனம் உண்டாகவில்லை. பின்பு, ப்ரபாஸதீர்த்தத்திற்கு வரும்போது அங்கு மார்க்கண்டேய மஹரிஷியை யடைந்து, ப்ரணா மாதிகளைப்பண்ணி, அடியேனை சரணமடைந்திருக்கும், பல்லிகளிரண்டிற்கும் பாப விமோசனமாய் மோக்ஷமடையும்படிக்கு அனுகிரஹிக்க வேண்டுமென்று ப்ரார்த்தித்து அந்த வழியையும் தனக்குச் சொல்ல வேண்டுமென்று வேண்டிக்கொள்ள, மார்க்கண்டேய மஹரிஷி சொல்லுகிறார்.

"கேளாய் பிராம்மணோத்தமா இந்தப் பல்லிகளின் பூர்வ ஜென்ம வரலாறுகளைச் சொல்லுகிறேன்.

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சூர்ய வம்சத்து அரசனான இக்ஷ்வாகுவின் வம்சத்தில் பிறந்த சகர மஹாராஜனுக்கு கேசினி சுமதி என்கிற இரண்டு தர்ம பத்தினிகள் இருந்தனர். இருவருக்கும் புத்திர சந்தானம் கிடையாது. புத்திர சந்தான அபேக்ஷையின் பேரில் அந்த சகர மஹாராஜன் தன் இரண்டு பத்தினிகளுடன் "ப்ருகுஸ்ரவணம்" என்கிற பர்வதத்தில் போய் நூறு வருஷம் தபம் செய்தான். அந்த தபஸ்ஸினால் ப்ருகு மஹரிஷி ப்ரீதியடைந்து சகர மஹாராஜனுக்கு ப்ரத்தியக்ஷமாகி மஹாராஜனே, உம்முடைய பத்தினிகளுக்கு புத்ர சந்தானம் உண்டாகப் போகின்றது. வமசோற்பத்திகா(கர?)னான ஒரு பிள்ளை ஒரு பத்தினிக்கும், அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகள் மற்றொரு பத்தினிக்கும் உண்டாவர்கள் என்று சொன்னார். இவர்களுக்குள் யாருக்கு ஒரு பிள்ளையும் எவளுக்கு அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகளும் உண்டாகுமென்று அரசன் ப்ரச்னை பண்ண, ப்ருகு மஹரிஷியானவர் உம்முடைய பத்தினிகள் இருவரில் வம்சோற்பத்திகா(கர?)னான பிள்ளையை யார் விரும்புவளோ அவளுக்கு ஒரு பிள்ளை கெட்ட குணமுடையவனாயும், மிகுந்த துஷ்டனாயும், தீர்க்காயுளோடும் ஜனிப்பான். அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகளை எவள் விரும்புகிறாளோ அவளுக்கு கீர்த்திமான்களாயும் மஹா பலிஷ்டாளாயும் அற்ப ஆயுளோடும் கூடிய அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகள் ஜனிப்பார்கள். ஆகையால்,

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உங்களிஷ்டப்படி நீங்கள் புத்திர சந்தானம் பெறலாமென்று சொல்லி அனுப்பி விட்டார். கேசினி வம்சோற்பத்திகா(கர?)னான ஒரு பிள்ளையையும், ஸுமதி

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அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகளையும் விரும்பி அப்படியே பெற்றார்கள். கேசினி குமாரனுக்கு அஸமஞ்ஜஸன் என்று பெயர் அவன் சிறுவயதாயிருக்கும்போதே, துஷ்க்ருத்யங்களைச் செய்ய வாரம்பித்து, யௌவனத்தில், இவனுக்கு விவாகம் நடந்தபடியால் அம்சுமானென்கிற ஒரு நல்ல பிள்ளையையும் பெற்றான்.

இந்த அஸமஞ்ஜஸன் என்பவன் ஊரிலுள்ள சிசுக்களையும் சிறுவர்களையும் தூக்கி ஸரயூவென்கிற மஹா நதியில் போட்டுவிட்டு அவைகள் படும் ப்ராண அவஸ்தைகளைக் கண்டுகளிக்கும் மஹா பாதகன். இன்னும் இத்தன்மையைப்போல அனேக ஹேய காரியங்களைச் செய்து, தன் பிதாவின் பட்டணத்திலுள்ள ஜனங்களுக்கு கெடுதியை விளைவித்துக்கொண்டு வந்த படியால் சகர மஹாராஜன் அந்த அஸ்மஞ்ஜஸனுக்கு எவ்வளவு நற்புத்தியை போதித்தும் கேளாமல் துஷ்க்ருத்யங்களையே செய்து வந்தமையால் அவனை தேச ப்ருஷ்டம் செய்து விட்டான். அப்போது அவனுடைய பத்தினியும் அவனுடன் கூடவே சென்றாள். காட்டில் மிருகங்களை ஹிம்சித்தும் வழிப்போக்கர்களை மடக்கி அடித்தும் வரும் வியாபாரங்களில் இவர்களுக்கு அபிருசியுண்டாய் விட்டபடியால், மேன்மேலும் பாப கிருத்யங்களையே செய்து வந்தார்கள். கடைசியாக இருவரும் மரணமடைந்து, அனேக ஹேய ஜென்மங்களையடைந்து இப்போது இந்த பல்லி ஜென்மத்தையும் அடைந்திருக்

[page 12:]
கிறார்கள். பிராம்மணோச் சிஷ்டம் இவர்கள் தலைமேல் பட்டபடியால் அந்த உச்சிஷ்ட மஹிமையினால் இவர்கள் தலை மட்டும் ஸ்வர்ண மயமாய் விட்டது.

பிறகு ஸகர சக்ரவர்த்தியானவன் அஸ்வமேத யாகம் பண்ணத்துடங்கி, அந்த அஸ்வத்தை பூப்ரதக்ஷணம் அனுப்பியதில் அந்த அஸ்வத்தை தேவேந்திரன் அபகரித்துக் கொண்டு போய் பாதாள லோகத்தில் தபஸ் செய்துகொண்டிருக்கும் கபில மஹரிஷியினிட சமீபத்தில் கட்டிவிட்டுப் போய்விட்டான். அஸ்வம் குறித்த காலத்திற்குள் திரும்பி வராமற்போகவே, ஸகர சக்ரவர்த்தியானவன் ஸுமதியின் அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகளை அனுப்பி அஸ்வத்தை தேடச் செய்தான். அவர்களும் பூமி முழுவதும் தேடி அஸ்வம் அகப்படாமல் பூமியைக் குடைந்து தோண்டி பாதாள உலகத்தில் சென்று தேட அங்கு கபில மஹரிஷியின் பக்கத்தில் அஸ்வம் கட்டப்பட்டிருக்கக் கண்டு இந்த மஹரிஷி தான் குதிரையை அபகரித்திருப்பானென்று அவரை பலபடியாக ஹிம்சித்தார்கள். அவர் கண்ணைத் திறந்து பார்த்தவுடனே இந்த அறுபதினாயிரம் பேர்களும் சாம்பலாய்ப் போய்விட்டார்கள். இவர்கள் பூமியைக் குடைந்து செல்லும்போது தேவர்கள் பயந்து ப்ரம்மாவினிடம் முறையிட அவர் ஸ்ரீ மஹாவிஷ்ணுவே கபில மஹரிஷியாக பாதாள உலகத்திலிருக்கிறார் அவரால் அவர்கள்

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முடிவடையப்போகிறார்கள் என்று சொல்லக்கேட்டு தேவர்கள் க்லேச மொழிந்து போய்விட்

[page 13:]
டார்கள். பிறகு சகரமஹாராஜன், அறுபதினாயிரம் பிள்ளைகளும் திரும்பி வராமற்போகவே அஸமஞ்ஜசன் பிள்யான அம்சுமானை அழைத்து உன் சிறிய தகப்பன்மார்கள் இன்னும் அச்வத்தைக்கொண்டு வரலில்லையாகையால் நீயாகிலும்போய் அஸ்வத்தைதேடிக் கொண்டுவா வென்று அனுப்ப, அவனும் பூலோகமெங்கும் தேடி அஸ்வம் அகப்படாமல் தன் சிறிய பிதாக்கள் சென்ற வழியே சென்று பாதாளத்தில் தேட அங்கு கபில மஹரிக்ஷியின் பக்கத்தில் அஸ்வமிருப்பதையும் எங்கு பார்த்தபோதிலும் பஸ்ப மயமாயிருப்பதையுங் கண்டு மஹரிஷியை ப்ரார்த்தித்து நடந்த விஷயங்களை யெல்லாம் அவரால் சவிஸ்தாரமாய் அறிந்துக் கொண்டு தன் சிறிய பிதாக்கள் அறுபதினாயிரம் பேர்களும் முத்தியடையும் வழியை அருளிச்செய்ய வேணுமென்று அவரையே ப்ரார்த்தித்த போது அவர் ஸ்ரீவிஷ்ணுவின் சரண கமலங்களினின்றும், பெருகி வரும் மது தாரையாகிய கங்கையைக் கொண்டு வந்து அதில் பிதுர்க் கடன்கள் செய்தால் அவர்கள் முக்தியடைவார்கள் என்றும், இனி நீ உன் அஸ்வத்தைக் கொண்டு போய் பாட்டனார் துவக்கிய யாகத்தைப் பூர்த்தி செய்யக் கடவை என்றும் அருளிச் செய்யக் கேட்டு அந்த அம்சுமானும் அவரிடம் விடை பெற்று அப்படியே பாட்டனார் யாகத்தைப் பூர்த்தி செய்வித்தான்.

பிறகு சகர சக்ரவர்த்தியானவன் தன் மக்கள் கடைத்தேறும்பொருட்டு கங்கையைக் கொண்டு வர

[page 14:]
எவ்வளவோ யோசித்தும் அதற்கு மார்க்கம் ஒன்றும் அறியாதவனாகவே அம்சுமானுக்கு ராஜ்யாபிஷேகம் செய்துவிட்டு தன் காலகதியை யடைந்தான். அந்த அம்சுமானும் தன் குமரான் திலீபனுக்கு ராஜ்யாபி ஷேகம் செய்வித்து தான் கங்கையைக் கொண்டுவர வெகுநாள் தபம் செய்து காரியம் நிறைவேறப் பெறாமல் கால கதியை அடைந்தான். பிறகு திலீபக்ச்கிரவர்த்தியும் தன் குமாரன் பகீரதனுக்கு மகுடாபிஷேகம் செய்துவிட்டு, தபத்துக்குப் போய் காரியம் நிறை வேறாமலே, லோகாந்தரத்தை யடைந்தான். கடைசி யாக பகீரதன் பெரிய ப்ரயத்தனம் செய்து கங்கையைக் கொண்டு வந்து பிதுர்க்கடனை நிறைவேற்றி, அதனால் தன் மூதாதைகளை முக்தியடையச் செய்தான்.

ஆகையால் கேளாய் பிராம்மணோத்தமா இந்தப் பல்லிகள் முக்தியடைய வேண்டுமானால் ஸத்ய வ்ருத மென்னும் பெயரையுடைய காஞ்சி நகரமான புண்ய க்ஷேத்திரத்திலே அனந்தசரஸ் என்கிற புண்ணிய தீர்த்தத்தில் இவைகளைக் கொண்டு போய் தீர்த்தமாடப் பண்ணுவித்து ஹஸ்திகிரியில் புண்ணியகோடி விமானத்தின்கீழ் எழுந்தருளியிருக்கும் வரதன் என்கிற தேவப் பெருமாளை ஸேவிக்கப்பண்ணுவித்தால் உடனே இந்த பல்லிகள் இரண்டிற்கும் பாப

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விமோசன முண்டாய் மோக்ஷ சாம்ராஜ்ய முண்டாகு மென்று மார்க்கண்டேய மஹரிஷியானவர் அருளிச் செய்யக்கேட்டு,

[page 15:]
அந்த உபமன்யு வென்கிற பிராம்மணன் அவரை தீர்க் கப்பிராணாயம் பண்ணி விடைபெற்று அப்பல்லிகளுடன் அவ்விடத்தினின்றும் புறப்பட்டு காஞ்சி க்ஷேத்திரத்தை யடைந்து மார்க்கண்டேய மஹரிஷி சொன்ன படி அனந்த சரஸில் பல்லிகளை தீர்த்தமாட்டி வைத்து ஸ்ரீப்ரணதார்த்தி ஹரவரதனை ஸேவிக்கப்பண்ணி அதனால் அவைகளுக்கு பாப விமோசன முண்டாய் மோக்ஷத்தையும் அடையும்படி செய்து வைத்தார்.

பின்பு அந்த உபமன்யு வென்கிற ப்ராம்மணன் பல்லிகள் மோக்ஷமடைந்ததைக் கண்டு ஆனந்தங் கொண்டு தானும் ஸ்ரீபேரருளாளனை ஸேவிக்கும்போது ஸ்ரீதேவப்பெருமாள் அந்த பிரார்மணனைக் குளிரக் கடாக்ஷித்து அருளிச்செய்ததாவது:- " உபமன்யு நீ மஹா பாக்கியசாலி கேவலம் ஹேயஜன்மக்களான பல்லிகளிரண்டும் மோக்ஷமடையும்படியான மாமஹோப காரத்தைப் பண்ணினாய், உன் க்ருபா விசேஷத்தையும் உன்னுடைய க்யாதியையும் பற்றிப்பேச யாருக்குத்தான் முடியும். பல பேசி, என்ன இப்பல்லிகள் இரண்டும் உன்னால் மோக்ஷமடைந்தன. ஆகையால் இவ்விரண்டு பல்லிகளையும் ஸ்வர்ணத்தால் செய்வித்து நம்முடைய ஹஸ்திகிரியில் கிழக்குப்பாகத்தில் ஸ்தாபிக்கக் கடவை. யாவனொருவன் இந்த ஹத்(ஸ்)திகிரியில் என்னை சேவித்தவனந்தரம் பாதக்ஷணஸ்திலுள்ள இப்பல்லிகளை வையமாளிகைப் பல்லி என்று

[page 16:]
க்ஷணகாலம் ஸ்மரித்தாலும் ஸேவித்தாலும் ஸ்பரிசித்தாலும் அவனுக்குப் பல்லிகள் மேலே விழுவதாலுண்டாகும் பாப ரோக தோஷ சமனங்கள் உண்டாம் என்பது திண்ணம். உன்னுடைய க்யாதியானது சூர்ய சந்திராள் உள்ள வரையில் நிலைத்திருக்கும் படிக்கும் அனுக்கிரஹித்தோமாகையால் நீ இப்பூவுலகின் கண் இன்னும் சிலகாலம் நம்மையே உபாஸித்துக்கொண்டிருந்து இறுதியில் நம்முடைய பேரின்ப வீட்டை ப்ரா பிக்கக்கடவை." என்று இவ்வாறு தேவப்பெருமாள் அருளிச்செய்தபடியே செய்துபிறகு சிலகாலம் அவரை உபாசித்து மோக்ஷமடைந்தான்.

ப்ரம்மாண்ட புராணே ஸ்ரீ காஞ்சி மஹாத்மியே
31-வது அத்யாயே ஸ்வர்ணமய பல்லிகளின்

மஹாத்மியம் முற்றிற்று.

டவுன் பிரஸ், காஞ்சிபுரம். 562. - 34.

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ஸ்ரீ

அனுபந்தம்

பல்லி விழுதலின் பலன்.

1.தலையில் - கலகம்.
2. கூந்தல் - லாபம்
3. சிரசில் - மரணம்.
4. நெற்றி - பட்டாபிஷேகம்.
5. முகம் - பந்து தரிசனம்.
6. புருவம் - இராஜானுக்ரஹம்.
7. மேலுதடு- தனவிரயம்.
8. கீழுதடு - தனலாபம்.
9.மூக்கு - வியாதி சம்பவம்.
10. வலது செவி - தீர்க்காயுசு.
11. இட செவி - வியாபார லாபம்.
12. நேத்திரங்கள் – காராக்ரஹப்ரவேசம்.
13. முகவாய்க்கட்டை - ராஜதண்டனை.
14. வாய் - பயம்.
15. கழுத்து - சத்ருநாசம்.
16. வலதுபுஜ(ஜ)ம் - ஆரோக்கியம்.
17. இடது புஜம் - ஸ்த்ரீ சம்போகம்.
18. வலது மணிக்கட்டு - பீடை.
19. இடது மணிக்கட்டு - கீர்த்தி.
20. ஸ்தனங்கள் - பாப சம்பவம்.
21. மார்பு - தன லாபம்.
22. வயிறு - தான்ய லாபம்.
23. நாபி- இரத்தின லாபம்

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24. உபயபாரிசம் - வெகுலாபம்.
25. துடைகள் - பிதா அரிஷ்டம்.
26. முழங்கால்கள் - சுபம்.
27. கணுக்கால் - சுபம்.
28. பாதம் - பிரயாணம்.
29. ப்ருஷ்டம் - சுபம்.
30. நகங்கள்- தனநாசம்.

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31. ஆண்குறி - தரித்ரம்.
32. இடக்கை - துயரம்.
33. வலக்கை - துக்கம்.
34. முதுகு - பொருள் நாசம்.
35. அபானம் - தனமுண்டு.
36. கால் விரல் - பயம்.
37. இடக்கை விரல் - துயரம்.
38. வலக்கை விரல் - இராஜ பயம்.
39. கணுக்கால் - சுபம்.
40. தேக ஒட்டம் - தீர்க்காயுஸ், இதில் எரினால் ஜெயம். இறங்கினால் அபஜெயம்.

- கூந்தல் - ம்ருத்யு பயம் என்று கூறுவாறு முளர்.

இப்படிப்பட்ட தோஷங்கள் ஷை புராணத்தில் கண்ட வையமாளிகைப் பல்லி என்கிற தங்கப்பல்லிகளின் தரிசன ஸ்பரிசன-ஸ்மரண மாத்திரத்தினாலே சமனமாய் வி(வீ)டுமென்பது ஷை புராண ப்ரசித்தமாயிரா நின்றது.

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"Reading" a Sacred Place Differently: Sarvatīrtha in Kanchipuram's Sanskrit *Māhātmyas*[1]

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Sarvatīrtha is the largest constructed temple tank in the South Indian temple town of Kanchipuram (Kanchi). It is a *tīrtha*, a body of water. *Tīrthas* have been used for ritual bathing since ancient times and are often credited with both purifying and redemptive powers. Many temples therefore encompass a *tīrtha* in their precincts for the devotees to take a ritual bath before visiting the deity. As sacred places, *tīrthas* are linked to other sacred places as part of a sacred landscape, which connects mythology with the natural landscape (Eck 2012). The study of mythological stories about sacred places thus promises to reveal a variety of notions about a local sacred landscape in which the places are situated.

Mythological stories about the origin and ascribed powers of the sacred place Sarvatīrtha are detailed in Sanskrit texts of praise (*māhātmyas*) on Kanchi. This contribution will explore the narratives about Sarvatīrtha from three *māhātmyas* both text-immanently and cross-textually. The focus will be on the spatial positioning of the place within the texts' understanding of Kanchi's sacred landscape and the contextualisation of the narratives with regard to the texts' overall orientation and structure. Before I turn to study Sarvatīrtha from these perspectives, I will first introduce the usage of the term *tīrtha*, the location of Sarvatīrtha and Kanchi's *māhātmyas*.

The Term *Tīrtha*

In its narrow sense, "*tīrtha*" denotes a sacred place that is a body of water, such as a temple basin, lake or river. My *māhātmya* sources use the term in this way and I adopt it for easier understanding. Hence, the designation Sarvatīrtha itself refers to the defining characteristic of the place as a body of water while at the same time constituting its proper name.

The broader understanding of the term *tīrtha* encompasses sacred places of various kinds. Accordingly, they can, for example, be a pond, a hill, a city, a temple, or a local representation of a particular deity. Often these sacred places are connected

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with water in some form, such as a temple basin or river. As Knut Jacobsen states, the association of a sacred place with water agrees with the understanding of the term *tīrtha* in earlier, pre-Purāṇic literature. It is based on the literal understanding of the word *tīrtha* as "ford," or "crossing." Places where one could cross water, sites associated with water and places for ritual bathing were in particular called *tīrtha* (Jacobsen 2013, 22). Later, in the Purāṇic literature, *tīrtha* rather refers to a place of transition, also on a spiritual level, where the presence of deities is more intense and rituals are more effective (Eck 2012, 7). Moreover, the aspect of transcendence may refer to the promised redemptive qualities of *tīrthas*, whereby people are supposed to not be reborn in the future after a visit there (possibly including performing certain rituals on site, for example a ritual bath) (Jacobsen 2013, 9). It further points to sacred sites being places for pilgrimage due to their ascribed ability to grant liberation.[2]

Sarvatīrtha in Kanchi's Geography and History

As a sacred place, Sarvatīrtha is one of many in Kanchi. Since ancient times, this city has been a centre of many religious traditions, learning and power. Within its densely populated ritual space, Buddhist, Jain, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Śākta traditions have cooperated and disputed each other, thus shaping the religious landscape of this place (Rao 2008, 18–29). The changing relationships of these traditions and their representatives are expressed and negotiated in a multitude of mythological stories on Kanchi, in its historiography, and in the various ritual traditions (Hüsken 2017, 68ff.).

The area (*kṣetra*) of Kanchi is considered to be continuously sacred, sanctified by the presence of a multitude of deities. Countless monumental temples and small shrines of different eras mark the city. The older among them date back to Kanchi's time as capital of the Pallava dynasty (third–ninth century CE), and many more were built under the Cholas (tenth–thirteenth century) and the Vijayanagara emperors (fourteenth–seventeenth century).[3] Particularly well known are the city's three largest temples, the Ekāmranātha temple (Śiva), the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple (Viṣṇu), and the Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ temple, one of the most important temples for the Goddess in India. As we will see, the narratives from the *māhātmyas* link Sarvatīrtha particularly to one of these places and its deity.

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2 For a discussion of various designations for "sacred place" as adapted to different characteristics, see Jacobsen 2013, 8–10.

3 See Stein 2017 and in this volume, Minakshi 1954 and Seshadri 2003 on the art history, and architecture and Srinivasan 1979 for a perspective on the history.

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Fig. 1: Map of Kanchi with the Varadarāja Perumāḷ, Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ, and Ekāmranātha temples and Sarvatīrtha.

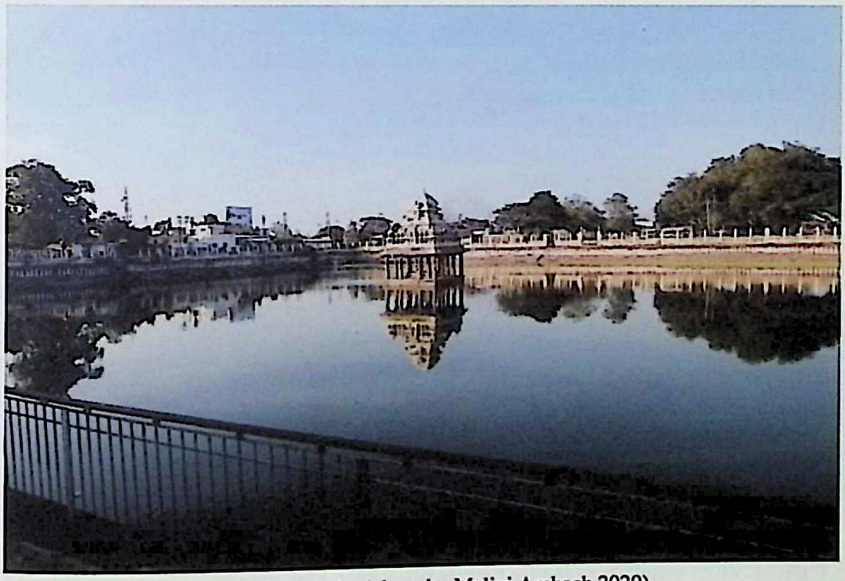

Fig. 2: Sarvatīrtha (photo by Malini Ambach 2020).

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Sarvatīrtha is the largest water basin in Kanchi with the typical physical appearance of a temple tank. It is situated at the north-western limit of today's city and west of the Ekāmranātha temple (see figure 1). The surrounding area is both industrial and residential. At the time of my visit in January 2020, the large basin was in sound shape and filled with water. It is enclosed by walls on all sides. These were painted in bright, not yet worn-off, wide red and white vertical stripes (characteristics that mark South Indian temples). There is a gate in the middle of the walls on each side and neat flights of stairs lead down to the water. A pavilion (*maṇḍapa*) is situated in the middle of the water (see figure 2).

The *tīrtha* is closely connected to the Ekāmranātha temple and seems to be maintained by said temple's administration. On the last festival day of the main annual festival (*mahotsava*; its specific Tamil name is *Paṅkuṉi Uttiram*) at the Ekāmranātha temple, the morning procession is extended to Sarvatīrtha for a purifying bathing rite (*tīrthasnāna*).[4] It serves the festival deities, priests and others to remove any impurities that might have happened during the daily festival processions (Schier 2018, 34, 65; also Seshadri 2003, 144).

The *tīrtha* is also a part of the main annual festival (*brahmotsava*) of the Varadarāja temple. The procession on the morning of the fifth day with Varadarāja in his incarnation as Mohinī[5] travels up to Sarvatīrtha, which is the farthest point west any procession goes (see figure 3).

In an inscription at this very temple, the Varadarāja temple, a reference to the history of Sarvatīrtha can be found. An inscription dated to the *śāka* year 1645 (1723 CE) tells of an underground aqueduct built from Sarvatīrtha at the north-western end of Kanchi to the Anantasaras temple tank within the Varadarāja temple compound at the other end of the city. The aim was to collect spring water from the nearby river to supply the many temple tanks in the city with water (*Annual Report on Epigraphy* 1920, 123). This indicates that Sarvatīrtha already existed at that time. A. K. Seshadri also supports this assessment: he presumes that Sarvatīrtha was built during the Pallava times (third – ninth century), as the steps and enclosing walls were originally made of sandstone dating from the Pallava period. According to Seshadri. it was only in more recent times that the sandstone walls had been completely replaced by brick ones and a fence had been added to prevent misuse of the tank. He further mentions that the pavilion inside the tank, whose superstructure is embellished with stucco figures, was added in later times (Seshadri 2003, 181f., 192).

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4 From 2008 to 2010, Sarvatīrtha was renovated, therefore *tīrthasnāna* was performed at Śivagaṅgātīrtha within the Ekāmranātha temple's precincts (Schier 2018, 66, fn. 62).

5 This is a reference to the narrative about the churning of the milk ocean found in various Purāṇas. Viṣṇu manifests in female form as bewitching Mohinī in order to retrieve the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) from the gods' enemies, the demons (see f. ex. *Bhāgavatapurāna* 8, chapters 8–9).

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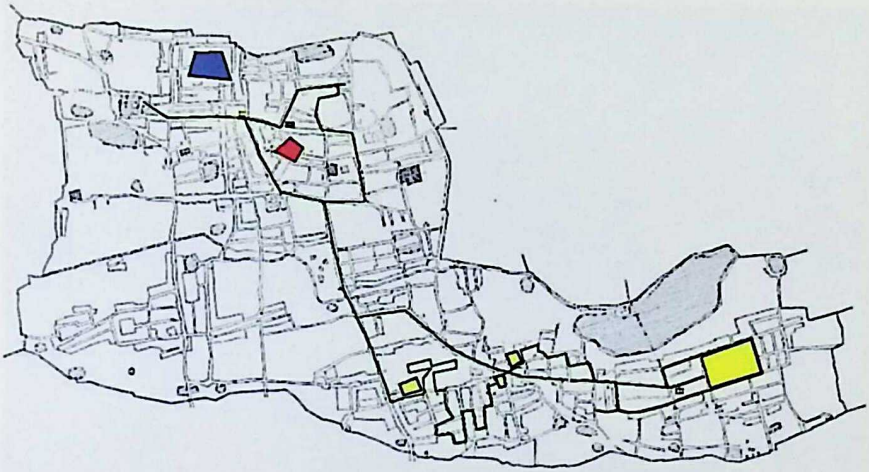

Fig. 3: Map of Varadarāja's Mohinī-*avatāra* procession during *brahmotsava* (by Ute Hüsken, adapted from Porcher 1985).

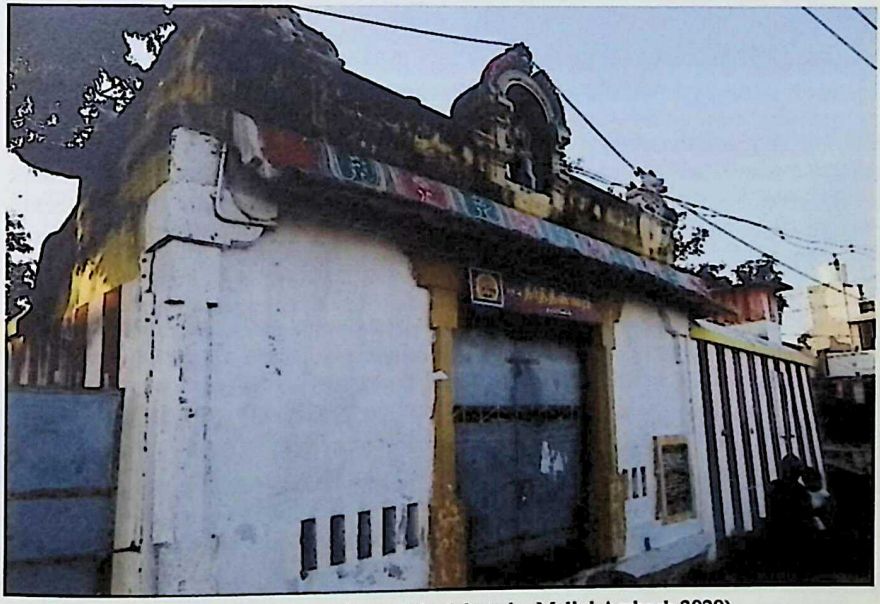

Fig. 4: Tīrtheśvara at Sarvatīrtha (photo by Malini Ambach 2020).

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Fig. 5: Map with temples around Sarvatīrtha.

Relying on this analysis of the architectural history of Sarvatīrtha, the tank thus dates back to a rather early origin. Its use in the centuries following its construction cannot be deduced from the sources consulted, until an inscription from the eighteenth century attests to the tank's inclusion in the water supply system of the city's temple tanks. Probably to maintain its usability, Sarvatīrtha has been renovated more than once in the more recent period.

Around the *tīrtha*, in-between workshops and houses and partly hidden behind them, there are several Śiva temples. The majority of these temples are compact walled shrines built around their Śaiva icon, the *liṅga* (see figure 4). Some of them are further enclosed by a wall that runs around a courtyard. A map (in Tamil) of Śaiva and Viṣṇu temples on display various Śaiva temples in Kanchi lists ten (nos. 125–134) temples at the shores of the tank and two more (nos. 135–136) close by.[6] These are (in Sanskrit) Hanumantīśvara, Gaṅgādhareśvara, Yogaliṅgeśvara,

6 Electronic version available here https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zUipQ8aUU02679YzJswryZk3C-v4nE7o/view (accessed June 20, 2021). An English rendering can be found here https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_2wE0wmmsqyQXY0VWFMNzdYLWc/view?resourcekey=0-5bf1OijLfYPPSMF-cR3rdg (accessed June 20, 2021).

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Lakṣmaṇeśvara, Sīteśvara, Mallikārjuneśvara, Rāmanātheśvara, Tīrtheśvara, Hiraṇyeśvara, Viśvanātheśvara, Kāmeśvara, and Dhavaḷeśvara. Partly with variant names, these shrines can be localised all around the *tīrtha* with the above sequence starting in the east and moving around clockwise[7] (see figure 5). One of the *māhātmya* sources on Kanchi, the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, describes six of these *śivaliṅgas* at the shores of the *tīrtha*,[8] and connects the narrative of Sarvatīrtha specifically to one of them.

Taking into account these aspects that we have gathered about the location, history, and use of Sarvatīrtha, we will now turn to the *māhātmya* texts that present their understanding of this place in the form of mythological narratives.

Māhātmya Texts on Kanchi

Descriptions of sacred sites like Sarvatīrtha and their ascribed efficacy are found in works belonging to the genre of Purāṇic Sanskrit *māhātmyas* (glorifications, legends, praise texts). More precisely, a text concerning itself with the creation of a local sacred landscape, one or more sacred places and their myth(s) of origin can be called *sthalamāhātmya* (glorification of a place).[9] However, the *sthalamāhātmyas* about

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7 The findings on site during my visit in January 2020 were supplied with information on these shrines from secondary literature (Seshadri 2003, 98, 144) and blogs about temples in Kanchi (Chamundihari 2014. "Aadhav's Temple Visits Kaancheepuram." Sadhananda Swamigal. Created February 19, 2014. Accessed June 20, 2021. https://sadhanandaswamigal.blogspot.com/2014/02/siva-temple-in-around-kancheepuram.html.; Kanishk, Aadav. 2017. "Sarva Teertham – Kanchipuram." *Temples of Kanchipuram* (blog). June 7, 2017. Accessed June 20, 2021. http://templesofkanchidist.blogspot.com/2017/07/sarva-theertham-dwadhasa-lingams.html; Sre Kagabujandar Nadi Astrological Research Centre. n.d. "Kanchipuram Temples." Sre Kagabujandar Nadi Astrological Research Centre, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. Accessed June 20, 2021. http://www.nadiastrologer.org/english_Kanchipuram_Temples.html). As for the names, Gaṅgādhareśvara is also known as Gaṅgāvareśvara or Varuṇeśvara, Rāmanātheśvara is also known as Rāmeśvara (or sometimes identified with Sīteśvara), Viśvanātheśvara is also known as Kāśī Viśvanātha, Kāmeśvara is also known as Manmatheśvara, and Dhavaḷeśvara is also known as Lakulīśvara. Thanks go to Jonas Buchholz for making me aware of the variant name of Dhavaḷeśvara and Kāmeśvara from Tamil descriptions (Shaivam.org n.d. „Lakulīcam (Tavaḷesvaram)." shaivam.org. Accessed June 20, 2021. https://shaivam.org/hindu-hub/temples/place/503/lakulicam-thavalesvarar; Dinamalar. n.d. „Kancipuram Civam Koyil." (page 40). *Dinamalar* (blog). Accessed June 20, 2021. https://temple.dinamalar.com/ListingMore.php?c=3&D=52&Page=40.

8 Hiraṇyeśvara (chapter 21), Kāmeśvara, Tīrtheśvara, Viśvanātheśvara (all chapter 29), Lakulīśvara (chapter 28), and Gaṅgāvareśvara (chapter 29).

9 In general, *māhātmyas* can describe and praise deities (e.g., *Devīmāhātmya*) or various religious practices like vows (e.g., *Ekādaśīmāhātmya*). Linda Wiig (1981, 15–18) supposes that ninety-five percent of the *māhātmya* texts she reviewed have a local reference in that they either deal with a sacred place of some kind (city, *tīrtha*, region), a deity, or its representation being present at a certain place.

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Kanchi I am dealing with simply use the designation *māhātmya* to denote themselves[10] and for the sake of readability I adopt this usage.

The *māhātmyas* about places praise the effectiveness of the place(s), one or more resident deities, or the local *tīrthas*. Additionally, they may explain the rituals that have to be performed in order to benefit from the particular powers ascribed to these sites. *Māhātmyas* reflect local and regional traditions and consider each site they describe as outstanding and most beneficial. This glorifying approach is a characteristic feature of this genre.

The authors of those texts are usually not historical persons. Instead, the texts are attributed to divine figures and do not mention the place or time in which they were written. As Peter Bisschop states, this anonymity is a factor in the authority of the *māhātmya* literature. The works are said to originate from an assumed divine telling and thus make a timeless truth claim (2011, 3). It can be, however, assumed that it was human authors who wrote these texts with an intention directly referring to their historical context of time and place (Bisschop 2011, 3f.). In the case of the texts written in Sanskrit, it were presumably members of the brahmin class, such as scholars or priests, who composed these *māhātmyas*. The richness in detail found in several passages from these texts suggests a precise knowledge of the respective geographical area on the part of the authors.

The *māhātmyas* on Kanchi express particular views on the the city and its sacred places, they praise local sites, deities, and certain ritual practices. The descriptions often include characters and narrative motifs known from the pan-Indian Purāṇic mythology. Common subjects are thereby localised at the very place the *māhātmya* describes and mythological occurrences are said to have happened right there.[11] The localisations are often expounded in a specific type of passage that is called *phalaśruti*. These passages explain why it is essential to go exactly to the site the text just describes and nowhere else. They tell of the benefit (*phala*, "fruit") of visiting that place. Sometimes a *phalaśruti* states that simply being present in Kanchi effects the desired benefit. More often, however, the worship of a certain deity or a bath in a *tīrtha* is prescribed. In this way, the *māhātmyas* place Kanchi in a superior position to all other places and simultaneously relate to the practice of pilgrimage.

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10 E.g., Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* 4.19ab (*proktaṃ vistarataḥ kāñcyā māhātmyaṃ varṇayāmi vaḥ* |) or the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* 32.21ab (*sarvam etan mayā proktaṃ kāṃcīmāhātmyam adbhutam*).

11 For example, Rāma is said to have created a *tīrtha* called *gṛdhra* (vulture-) to give water to the vulture Jaṭāyu, who had been hurt deadly in the fight with Rāvaṇa. This is also the site of Jaṭāyu's subsequent salvation (*mokṣa*) (Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* 8.40–45). These characters and the general story are well known from the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* (cf. *Rāmāyaṇā*, *Araṇyakāṇḍa*, *sarga* 63–64). In the *māhātmya* here, this event is made happen in Kanchi's area and localised at the specific *tīrtha* called Gṛdhra. This sacred water body is located at the Vijayarāghava Perumāḷ temple in Thiruppukuzhi (Kanchipuram district) and is known as Jāṭāyutīrtha.

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The place Sarvatīrtha is dealt with in three Sanskrit *māhātmya* texts on Kanchi.[12] Each of these texts presents its very own and distinctive design of Kanchi's sacred geography based on its sectarian orientation and overall structure. Existing side by side, the *māhātmyas* differ in the choice of sacred places they describe and in the means by which they spatially contextualise them in Kanchi. Additionally, the narrational style and inclusion of certain narrational elements, such as statements on the ascribed rewards of a site, vary considerably. How these characteristics come into play in the stories about Sarvatīrtha from the *māhātmyas* and to what end will be studied below. Before, I will shortly introduce the texts that contain descriptions of this water body.

(a) The first text bears the title *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(V); (V) = Vaiṣṇava), consists of thirty-two chapters and attributes itself to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.[13] The largest part of the text is taken up by the core narrative telling of the god Brahmā, who performs an *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice) in Kanchi to see Viṣṇu (KM(V) chapters 9–17). This is the mythology of Viṣṇu's manifestation as Varadarāja, who is represented in the temple of the same name. The KM(V) further devotes a few chapters to the description of *tīrthas* situated within Kanchi and the wider area around it (KM(V) chapters 5–8) and to shorter narrative cycles on the origin of further representations of Viṣṇu.[14] Connected to one of the Vaiṣṇava narratives are the myths of Śiva Ekāmranātha and the goddess Kāmākṣī, which are told intertwined with each other (KM(V) chapters 23–25). In these myths, forms of Viṣṇu are attributed greater importance than the other two *māhātmyas* on Kanchi display in their renditions of Ekāmranātha's and Kāmākṣī's mythologies. In general, the Vaiṣṇava focus of this text is apparent throughout: not only is Viṣṇu attributed a superordinate role but also the large majority of sites are either abodes of Viṣṇu or *tīrthas* linked to one of Viṣṇu's manifestations by their narratives.

(b) The second text, also called *Kāñcīmāhātmya* (KM(Ś); (Ś) = Śaiva), is written from a Śaiva perspective and, according to its own statement, belongs to a part of the *Skandapurāṇa*.[15] The text names and describes over one hundred of Śiva's sacred places all over Kanchi and in the extended surroundings and tells the related narratives in various lengths. As found in the KM(V), deities, sages, and other mythological characters well-known from the Purāṇic mythology serve as protagonists, i.e., Śiva's worshippers, in the narratives. A larger portion of the chapters (KM(Ś) chapters 39–45) is dedicated to the myth of Ekāmranātha, Śiva's manifestation housed in the largest Śaiva temple in Kanchi. It tells of Śiva's wife Pārvatī who builds and worships a *liṅga* of sand in Kanchi to attain her husband's presence

12 See Buchholz in this volume for a comprehensive survey of the Sanskrit *māhātmyas* on Kanchi.
13 Edition from 1906 by P.B. Anantācārya, Devanāgarī script.
14 For a study on the underlying general structure, see Porcher 1985.
15 Editions from 1899 and from 1967, both in Telugu script.

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there.[16] In the course of the KM(Ś), Vaiṣṇava places (including Varadarāja) and their myths of origin are described, albeit rather briefly and with reference to how Viṣṇu worships Śiva to achieve a desired aim. The goddess Kāmākṣī and her mythology are also featured in the text, in parts independently and partly embedded in the Ekāmranātha myth (Kāmākṣī as manifestation of Pārvatī). Overall, the understanding of Śiva as superior prevails and gives the text a clear Śaiva orientation.

(c) The third *māhātmya* dealt with here is a text titled *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* (KV). It consists of fourteen chapters and attributes itself to the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*.[17] Just over a third of the chapters (KV chapters 1, 11–14) deal with the mythology of Kāmākṣī, the famous representation of the Goddess in Kanchi. These clearly show a Śākta orientation and display a (local) divine hierarchy in which Kāmākṣī is placed at the top. Her origin myth tells the story of the great Goddess (Devī) staying in Kanchi in her universal form as Mahātripurasundarī. It employs a common narrative motif of Goddess' mythology by relating how Devī kills a certain demon to rescue the world.[18] The mythology evolves in an area (*kṣetra*) in the centre of Kanchi (where the Kāmākṣī temple is), which is specifically assigned to Kāmākṣī and characterised in a separate chapter (KV chapter 10) by listing various sacred places located in this area. These sites consist of *śivaliṅgas*, Viṣṇu's abodes, Goddesses, and *tīrthas* in almost equal number, thereby showing no clear emphasis in one way or the other.

In a similar manner, the KV describes a *kṣetra* of Varadarāja in the south-east of Kanchi (where his temple is) and a rendering of his mythology (KV chapters 2–5) and an area of Ekāmranātha in the north-west (around his temple) and his story of origin (KV chapters 6–9). These narratives present Viṣṇu and Śiva in the pre-eminent position. This contrasting approach to the obvious Śākta orientation of the Kāmākṣī chapters is resolved by stating that Viṣṇu (Varadarāja) and Śiva (Ekāmranātha) are but manifestations of the Goddess (KV chapter 1), thus establishing the underlaying understanding of Devī on top of the divine hierarchy.[19]

As already apparent from this overview, the three *māhātmya* texts refer to a common mythological corpus. In spite of their varying sectarian affiliations, the texts still cover the same core narratives, yet attributing different importance to them and to individual elements. These myths are all set in the same sacred space of Kanchi, wherefore the *māhātmyas* provide insight into the religious traditions' various understandings of the very same place(s). Moreover, they adapt universal and transre-

16 This narrative is explored in detail by Kerstin Schier (2018) in her study of the annual temple festival at the Ekāmranātha temple.

17 Editions from 1889 in Telugu script and from 1968 in Devanāgarī.

18 The motif of the Goddess slaying a demon who pains the world is frequently incorporated in Goddess's mythology. Its most comprehensive narrative is the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*. On specifically the version of this narrative from the KV, see Ilkama 2018, 62–70.

19 Among other aspects, this leads Anne Moßner in her study of the KV to regard the complete text as written from a Śākta perspective (2008, 7f.).

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gional narrative motifs known from the *Purāṇas* to local spatial settings and include familiar characters in local renderings of mythological stories.

Sarvatīrtha in Kanchi's Mythologies

I will now explore the aspects of differing interpretations of the same place, the means used to contextualise a sacred place within a larger sacred geography and the relations of local mythological narratives to pan-Indian Purāṇic motifs and characters in more detail based on the example of Sarvatīrtha. This study is based on relevant text passages from the three *māhātmyas* which relate the story (of origin) and characteristics of Sarvatīrtha.

(a) The (Vaiṣṇava) *Kāñcīmāhātmya* mentions Sarvatīrtha and its mythology at two places. The first passage constitutes one episode in a description of several *tīrthas* located within Kanchi (KM(V) chapter 5). It summarises the myth of origin of Sarvatīrtha with barely hinting at the contextualising narrative in which it is embedded.

> [Sage Nārada talks to king Ambarīṣa:] "Another [*tīrtha*] again, lord of kings, is the most significant and best among the *tīrthas*. It is called Sarvatīrtha and removes all evil (*pāpa*). Once gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas, highest seers and *tīrthas* in the world, that are lakes, rivers and likewise (male) rivers, all gathered. Where they stood and praised Keśava (Viṣṇu) to make Gaṅgā pure again after she had become inauspicious because of Gaurī's (Pārvatī) curse, there is the best among *tīrthas*. It is meritorious and endowed with all *tīrthas*" (KM(V) 5.46–49b).[20]

From this condensed version we learn that the *tīrtha* was created where various heavenly beings and bodies of water unitedly pled with Viṣṇu for the cursed Gaṅgā to become pure again. The context of the mythological event does not become clear but an orientation towards Viṣṇu is indicated by the gods seeking help from Viṣṇu, who is thus given a position of power. Also missing is an information on the location of the *tīrtha* in Kanchi. Only several verses before in the same chapter, in episodes on other water bodies, are spatial references given. These state that a *tīrtha* called Indratīrtha lies in the north-west of Hastiśaila (KM(V) 5.19cd) and that there are several more situated in the same direction (KM(V) 5.27c–29b). This localisation hence pertains to Sarvatīrtha as well. Hastiśaila, ("elephant hill"[21]), on whose top Varadarāja resides, lies rather far away across the city from Sarvatīrtha (see figure 2) but is a central site in the KM(V) due to its connection to Varadarāja indicating the overall spatial orientation of the text.

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20 All translations are my own. The respective Sanskrit passages are given in the Appendix.

21 This is the specific name of the building at whose first floor the sanctum sanctorum of the Varadarāja temple is situated. On different derivations of this name, see Raman (1975, 6) and Srinivasan (1979, 7).

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Both the specific spatial link and the larger mythological narrative involving the origin of Sarvatīrtha are later elaborated in the KM(V) chapters 26 to 27. To allow an understanding of the episode on Sarvatīrtha within the multi-layered storyline, I will first summarise here the larger narrative that is the rendition of Ekāmranātha's myth in the KM(V) (KM(V) chapters 23–25): Pārvatī is cursed by Śiva to have black skin and ugly eyes. She performs penance at Kanchi and Viṣṇu as Vāmana relieves her from the curse. Divinely beautiful again, she receives the name Kāmākṣī and stays in Kanchi. Pārvatī then wishes to be near Śiva, and Vāmana instructs her to build a sand *liṅga*. While Pārvatī worships the *liṅga* continuously, Śiva sends various disturbances to test her devotion. The last one is Gaṅgā, whose waters Śiva releases from his hair. Pārvatī is furious about this disturbance and embraces the sand *liṅga* for protection. She also curses Gaṅgā to become ugly and inauspicious (and therefore unfit for ritual bathing, for which the Gaṅgā is particularly famed). Śiva then eventually manifests in Kanchi to be with Pārvatī there.[22] Only after this narrative has come to an end (ends in KM(V) chapter 25), is the storyline centring around Gaṅgā taken up again (KM(V) chapters 26–27). This extension from the Ekāmranātha myth is only found in the Vaiṣṇava text and not in the other two *māhātmyas*. Taking up the widely known idea of the Gaṅgā as epitome of a purifying river, it details Gaṅgā's quest for liberation from the curse, which causes the gods together with all *tīrthas* to travel the worlds in search of Viṣṇu. They praise him and ask him to make Gaṅgā pure again. Eventually, Viṣṇu appears in front of the gods and Gaṅgā in Kanchi, and the gods and *tīrthas* praise him there. They all see him as Varadarāja and mounted on the bird Garuḍa as his vehicle. Viṣṇu then fulfils the gods' and Gaṅgā's plea for the latter's redemption and renewed auspiciousness. He creates *tīrthas* at the places in Kanchi where the gods (Sarvatīrtha) and Gaṅgā (Maṅgalatīrtha) stood to praise him. The passage about the origin of Sarvatīrtha reads as follows:

> [Varadarāja speaks to Gaṅgā:] " 'Also where the gods all stood together unified to free you from this inauspicious curse and delighted me, there a huge, meritorious and purifying lake shall come into being. They shall all live in this lake on my command. As all gods indeed continually live in this *tīrtha*, this purifying lake shall be called Sarvatīrtha.'

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22 On the different version of Ekāmranātha's myth in the three Sanskrit *māhātmyas* on Kanchi and other Sanskrit and Tamil sources, see Schier 2018, 73–96. The element of Pārvatī cursing Gaṅgā is only found in the Vaiṣṇava text, to which Kerstin Schier (2018, 90) writes: "Of particular interest is the episode in which Pārvatī curses the river Gaṅgā, making it an outcast. By extension, everybody who comes into contact with the river also becomes an outcast. Usually, Gaṅgā is regarded as the salvific river par excellence. The curse of Gaṅgā occurs only in this version of the myth. I can offer no explanation for this singular variation, except the underlying jealousy of Pārvatī and Gaṅgā, which is known from pan-Indian myth, and serves as a theme in the oral tradition of the Ekāmranātha temple festival [...]".

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The man who bathes in there with devotion, performs the act of tonsure and *pārvaṇaśrāddha* (ancestor ritual (*śrāddha*) at the conjunction of sun and moon (*pārvaṇa*)) shall be known as one who has performed an *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice)." (KM(V) 27.22–25)

The Gaṅgā narrative then culminates in the explanation of Garuḍasevā, Varadarāja's procession mounted on the man-eagle Garuḍa as his vehicle (*vāhana*). Varadarāja instructs Brahmā to take him on Garuḍa up to Maṅgalatīrtha (where Gaṅgā praised Viṣṇu) for Gaṅgā to see him there each year during *brahmotsava* (annual festival). Gaṅgā will be annually present at Maṅgalatīrtha, too, and will thus become purified from the sins that people have emitted in her waters when taking a ritual bath. In this way, the Gaṅgā narrative, evolving from a Śaiva mythology, serves as transition to a Viṣṇu-oriented one, explaining why Varadarāja takes to the western part of Kanchi during *brahmotsava*, the largest annual temple festival at the Varadarāja temple. Interestingly, the Garuḍasevā procession these days does not pass by Sarvatīrtha (only Maṅgalatīrtha, where Gaṅgā stood; see figure 3), but the procession with Varadarāja as Mohinī on another day during the festival[23] (Hüsken 2013, 111, fig. 4). The inclusion of Garuḍasevā in the narrative further highlights the link between Sarvatīrtha and Varadarāja at the other end of the city, which reflects the localisation of the *tīrtha* analysed in the context of the first passage given above.

The necessity to introduce the rather lengthy narrative in order to fully understand the inclusion of the passage on Sarvatīrtha shows that the focus of the KM(V) is on mythological narratives: mythology sets the course of the narrative and only after the story has evolved sufficiently, events from the narrative are localised at specific places. This procedure is characteristic for most of the KM(V) and is exemplarily shown by the second passage on Sarvatīrtha. Here, too, the narrative is the starting point and only later the connection of a mythological event (the gods praise Viṣṇu) to a specific place (Sarvatīrtha) is established.

As far as the myth of Sarvatīrtha is concerned, the two passages from the KM(V) agree with each other. The second one is taken out of a larger narrative and needs context to make sense. It only indicates the creation of the *tīrtha* as such. Conversely, the first episode is self-contained but needs contextualising as the summary is very condensed. The naming of Sarvatīrtha, however, corresponds in both episodes, with the first passage being more general. It mentions that Sarvatīrtha is endowed (*samanvita*) with all [who had gathered to praise Viṣṇu there] while the second section derives the name more explicitly, as the word *sarva* in the place's name is understood as stemming from *all* the gods actually residing at this *tīrtha* on Viṣṇu's command. Additionally, the efficacy of Sarvatīrtha in the context of ancestor rituals (*śrāddha*) is highlighted in the same passage. This goes beyond the general

23 Garuḍasevā takes place in the morning of the third day, the procession with Viṣṇu as Mohinī in the morning of the fifth day of *brahmotsava* (Hüsken 2013, 102, fn. 9). On the festival, see Hüsken 2013, 101ff.

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attributions of it being the best place of all and destroying all sins mentioned in the summarising first episode.

Overall, the place Sarvatīrtha as such occupies a secondary role in the context of the larger multi-layered narrative that originally starts out from the myth of Ekāmranātha. Instead, emphasis is given to the mythological events leading to the creation of the *tīrtha*. In this, the description of Sarvatīrtha is exemplary for how many of the myths of sacred places are dealt with in the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. Likewise, the spatial orientation with reference to Hastiśaila and Varadarāja underlines their central position in the text's design of Kanchi's sacred geography.

(b) The Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya* has a distinctly different approach to both the place Sarvatīrtha and its mythology. In chapter 29 of the text we find the story on the origin of the *tīrtha* and in chapter 45 the place is mentioned again in the context of Ekāmranātha's mythology. The first passage on Sarvatīrtha is embedded in descriptions of *śivaliṅgas* situated on its shores. One of them is Tīrtheśvara (see figure 5), and to fully understand the context, it is necessary to first summarise the passage on this *liṅga*. This story immediately precedes the verses on Sarvatīrtha and is linked to them in terms of content. In the story of Tīrtheśvara, all the *tīrthas* come to Kanchi for purification. They all install a *liṅga* with their name (*tīrtha-*) there to worship Śiva. Pleased by the *tīrthas*' devotion, Śiva stays at the *tīrtha's* shores (they all form one water body) as Tīrtheśvara (Tīrtheśa in the text) and grants them a boon. Then the part on Sarvatīrtha begins, which reads as follows:

> [Śiva speaks to the *tīrthas*:] " 'From now onwards, people who bath in you all, satiate gods, sages, and ancestors, then give wealth to a Yogī, and see me as Tīrtheśvara, will attain the highest liberation. If a man shaves, takes a bath in the water of Sarvatīrtha and particularly performs the act of *śrāddha* (ceremony for the dead ancestors), gives some *dakṣiṇā* (donation for a priest) to brahmins, too, and honours me—or if he once offers obeisance to [me]—who [I] stay at the *tīrtha*, then his ancestors will be satisfied and reach me.' [...]
>
> [The narrator Kauśika continues:] The murder of a brahmin, of a hero, of an embryo, and of the father perish in the moment [of bathing], and so do the murder of the mother, and of a cow. By bathing in this Sarvatīrtha and by seeing Tīrtheśa, the sins of man and others are destroyed. [...]
>
> Just by bathing here, Prahlāda was freed from the fault of patricide and Vibhīṣaṇa from the great fault of murdering his brother. Likewise, Paraśurāma [was freed] just by bathing in the beautiful Sarvatīrtha in front of Tīrtheśa for the liberation from [the fault] a murder of a hero, too, and Rāma, the enemy of Rāvaṇa, who had come with this brother. After he had killed the teachers headed by Droṇa and Kṛpa, Arjuna similarly became one whose sin was gone after bathing in Sarvatīrtha, the best of all [*tīrthas*]. He became a knower of the essence of Śiva and attained to unlimited fame. For the liberation from embryo-murder, Aśvatthāman bathed [in it], too. [...]" (KM(Ś) 29.14c–30b).

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With regard to the aspect of spatial references, this section from the KM(Ś) establishes a link between Sarvatīrtha and Tīrtheśvara, who is situated at the tank's shores. The connection is grounded in a unifying narrative and stressed by statements on the ascribed power of Sarvatīrtha. This is said to come to fruition through the combination of taking a bath in its waters and visual perception (*darśana*) of Tīrtheśvara. A geographical closeness is thus emphasised by a prescription of ritual acts. At the same time, the worship of Śiva (here in his particular representation as Tīrtheśvara) is integrated into the rituals involving Sarvatīrtha. In my view, this order reflects a mode of worship directed towards the deity (here Śiva) and attributes a supplementary role to a bath in the *tīrtha* and consequently to the site itself. Therefore the *tīrtha* is not considered a standalone place but is instead thought of in connection to a *śivaliṅga*.

Besides the underlying arrangement that groups Sarvatīrtha with Tīrtheśvara, the *phalaśruti* stories of this text passage are its most prominent characteristic. Among the rewards to be given by Sarvatīrtha, its power to redeem the fault of murder is particularly highlighted. This ascription is underlined through examples of various figures known from the pan-Indian mythology, such as Prahlāda, Paraśurāma, Rāma and Arjuna. They are said to have been freed from the sin of murder after they took a (ritual) bath in Sarvatīrtha. These examples refer to mythological events described in Purāṇic and epic narratives (e.g., Rāma defeating Rāvaṇa in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and link them to Sarvatīrtha in Kanchi. In this way, interpretations of particular story lines from well-known narratives are created to incorporate the local site, attempting to place it in a broader context and highlight its efficacy.

In comparison with the narrative about Sarvatīrtha presented in the KM(V), a correspondence can be noted. Here as there, a sacred place is created where the gods as/and *tīrthas* had gathered to worship the deity whom the respective text considers the highest. However, this motif from the combined story of Tīrtheśvara and Sarvatīrtha in the KM(Ś) is contextualised in the Vaiṣṇava text in a narrative about Gaṅgā, which evolves from an event in Ekāmranātha's myth but basically aims at the explanation of Varadarāja's procession (see above). As we will see, both the KM(Ś) and the KV continue the Śaiva narrative differently. Therefore I wonder why particularly this element has found its way into the KM(V) in a distinctly different context.

The second passage from the KM(Ś) is directly woven into the narrative of Ekāmranātha's myth of origin (KM(Ś) chapters 39–45). Instructed by Śiva, Pārvatī builds and worships a *liṅga* of sand in Kanchi to attain her husband's presence there. To test her devotion, Śiva causes a great destructive flood to arise from the nearby Kampā river.[24] Pārvatī embraces the sand *liṅga* to protect it from the flood and her female companion Bhadrakāḷī helps her tame the waters. Śiva then appears, pleased

24 The idea of a destructive flood is found in Tamil tradition from early literature onwards (Shulman 1980, 55ff.).

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with Pārvatī's steadfast dedication, and gives instructions on what to do with the waters collected in Bhadrakāḷī's skull-bowl. This episode involves Sarvatīrtha and reads as follows:

> [Kauśika narrates:] "The moon-crowned one (Śiva) called Bhadrakāḷī and said: 'Well, Bhadrā, your entire behaviour is dear to Devī (Pārvatī). Quickly release all the water from your skull-like vessel that is in your hand. As you made the water slow down that resembles water of a destructive flood (*praḷaya*), you are named Praḷayamandā (the one who slows down *praḷaya*). Called [by this name] you stand in front of me.'
>
> Then all the water was released from the skull-bowl by the one thus spoken to (Bhadrakālī) and the one who was served by [the gods] beginning with Hari (Viṣṇu) and Brahmā (= Śiva) arrested this water with his light in his western direction to [the *tīrtha*] called Sarvatīrtha.
>
> This Sarvatīrtha in Kāñcī destroys the sin of assaulting a brahmin etc. By remembering it, old age and death are removed for men." (KM(Ś) 45.109–113)

From this section we learn that the caught-up water from the overflowing Kampā river was released into Sarvatīrtha. I argue, that this is not the *tīrtha's* myth of origin but an integration of an already existing place into the extended mythology of Ekāmranātha. In the context of the latter, the site Sarvatīrtha only makes an appearance in passing to tell what happens to the waters of the flood sent by Śiva and thus wraps up this narrative strand. The myth of origin of Sarvatīrtha forms the narrative in KM(Ś) chapter 29 that is detailed above. Overall, this means that, unlike in the KM(V) (and in the KV, see below), there is no separate narrative about Sarvatīrtha that evolves from the main mythology on Ekāmranātha. Nevertheless, the *tīrtha*, which is situated at a short distance (see figure 1), is spatially linked to the site of Ekāmranātha through the story told in the second text passage. A reflection of this notion is found in the present role of Sarvatīrtha during the annual temple festival of the Ekāmranātha temple, when the concluding ritual bath is carried out there.

(c) The *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* takes another approach on Sarvatīrtha by dedicating an entire chapter (KV chapter 9) to its mythology. Following the KV's version of Ekāmranātha's myth (KV chapter 8), it refers back to an event occurring in the latter narrative, similarly to the KM(V) and the second episode from the KM(Ś). Likewise, the narrative in the KV about Ekāmranātha closely resembles the renderings found in the other two *māhātmyas* and includes several of the same aspects. Since this myth contextualises the chapter on Sarvatīrtha, I will introduce the basic story line relevant for the origin of the *tīrtha*: to atone for covering his eyes, Śiva instructs Pārvatī to venerate him in Kanchi. Accordingly, Pārvatī builds a *liṅga* out of sand and worships it. Śiva sends Kampā (local name of the Gaṅgā) twice in form of a destructive flood (*praḷaya*) to disturb Pārvatī's efforts. The first time the waters are contained in a skull-bowl by one of Pārvatī's female companions, subsequently called Praḷayabandhinī (the one who tames *praḷaya*). When the waters of the Kampā roll in for the

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second time, Pārvatī embraces the *liṅga* to protect it. Pleased, Śiva agrees to stay in Kanchi as Ekāmranātha.

The chapter about Sarvatīrtha then starts with the location of the site and a description of the course of the Kampā river, which flows along bodies of water and absorbs them on its way to Kanchi (KV 9.3–10b). Then the scene changes to after the waters of the Kampā are contained in Praḷayabandhinī's skull-bowl (as told in Ekāmranātha's myth). On this basis, the story continues to introduce the origin of the *tīrtha* and at the same time closes the narrative strand about the water of the Kampā that was previously held up in the vessel.

> [The sage Mārkaṇḍeya narrates to king Suratha:] "To affirm [his] love for Śivā (Pārvatī) and in order to remove her fear, Śaṅkara (Śiva) hid Gaṅgā, who originates in the masses of his twisted hairlocks, when she was on earth as the destructive [flood] (*praḷayarūpinī*), in the ground by putting his foot down on the earth (creating a hole). [...] The skull-like vessel Praḷayabandhinī laid down to hinder *praḷaya* when the Kampā came for destruction [of the sand *liṅga*], and which holds together the water of the Kampā as long as the water was inside the vessel, that skull-like vessel is there [at the hole], releasing the water of this destructive [flood].
>
> Then Gaurī as eight-year-old heard of the glories of this *tīrtha* and wished for the beauty of fresh youth. According to the rules said by Śaṅkara in his words of grace, Pārvatī then had Devaśilpin (Viśvakarman, the divine constructor) make steps, proper walls, etc. for this *tīrtha*. Mahāgaurī (Pārvatī) then established the divine name Sarvatīrtha to be known for this *tīrtha*, because it is forever a combined *tīrtha* of thirty-five million *tīrthas* together with the flowing Kampā, king. After she took a bath in this *tīrtha*, Gaurī, full of fresh youth and endowed with beauty, attained splendour and auspiciousness. She became visible in refined golden [form] as Kāmākṣī, who grants wishes (*kāma*) [...]." (KV 9.12–21b)

Contextualised in terms of characters and narrative from Ekāmranātha's mythology, this episode offers a rather detailed story about the origin and evolution of Sarvatīrtha. Up to the point where the water released from the vessel of Pārvatī's companion Praḷayabandhinī flows into Sarvatīrtha, the narrative shows a great similarity with parts of the KM(Ś). Whereas I interpret the Śaiva text to understand the water from the skull-bowl as water supply for an already existing *tīrtha*, I consider the same narrative motif to form the story of origin of Sarvatīrtha in the KV. The reason is that the KV presents a self-contained story and mentions why (to console Pārvatī) and how (creating an indentation) Śiva first creates the place where the water from the vessel can be collected.

The story then continues with Pārvatī, who has the physical architecture of the tank built, which makes the KV the only text to mention details about the material appearance. While still set in a mythological framework, this element refers to a physically tangible construction of Sarvatīrtha resembling a temple tank as we might picture it and as can be still seen today on site. The description is too general to ascertain a familiarity with the place on part of the composers of the KV. More likely

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it is a reflection of the understanding of how the outer form of a *tīrtha* is imagined to look like. However, the most notable characteristic is that architectural features *are* described. These are only addressed in exceptional cases in the text (just as in the KM(V) and KM(Ś)), as the focus lies on the sacredness of the places itself. The significance of any sacred place is thus understood to be independent of possibly changing buildings at the site and consequently assigned a continuous claim to sacredness.

Subsequent to the first text passage from the KV given above, the narrative about Pārvatī is brought to a close. It now turns to the efficacy of Sarvatīrtha. As the main character, Pārvatī is the one to profit from the beneficial character of Sarvatīrtha (see episode above) and afterwards awards Sarvatīrtha certain powers.

> [The sage Mārkaṇḍeya narrates to king Suratha:] "Mahāgaurī then worshipped the *tīrtha* and gave it a boon. 'By seeing Sarvatīrtha, people will receive the reward of visiting and bathing in all *tīrthas* and they attain Śiva, too,' is the boon Gaurī granted [...]. From that time onwards the pleasant Sarvatīrtha is there. King, the reward one may receive by bathing in all the *tīrthas* situated in Kāñcī at the prescribed time, all these rewards one obtains by [taking] a bath once in Sarvatīrtha. Once many [people] desiring *mokṣa* (liberation) took a bath in Sarvatīrtha, were freed from evil, and went to Śiva's world." (KV 9.32–37)

Besides the more general ascriptions of rewarding qualities, this episode specifically refers to the name of the *tīrtha* in that only the sight of Sarvatīrtha will give the same benefits of visiting and bathing in all (*sarva*) *tīrthas*. It even establishes a local reference by stating that just one bath in Sarvatīrtha is equal in rewards to taking a bath in all *tīrthas* in Kanchi. The name Sarvatīrtha itself is also derived from the idea that the place incorporates all bodies of water (*sarvatīrtham iti khyātaṃ sarvatīrtha-samanvayāt*, KV 9.4cd), more specifically the river Kampā and a huge amount of *tīrthas* as given in the first passage from the KV. The beginning of the chapter (KV 9.3–10b) details the course of Kampā along various bodies of water up to Kanchi, illustrating the notion that it consists of *tīrthas*.

The ascribed efficacy of Sarvatīrtha is taken up again in an illustrative *phalaśruti* story highlighting the efficacy of the place. In agreement with both the KM(V) and the KM(Ś), it particularly emphasises the powers of Sarvatīrtha with reference to *śrāddha* (KV 9.38–45).[25]

Furthermore, the KV is very clear in locating Sarvatīrtha. Due to the text's strict adherence to locating the sacred places it describes, it states that the *tīrtha* is eight *aṃśas* (parts) south-west of Ekāmranātha in Rudraśālā (KV 9.3- 4b), reflecting the spatial relationship on site (see figure 1). Rudraśālā is the area in Kanchi's west

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25 A twice-born living at the bank of the Tāmrapārṇī (Thamirabarani river, Tirunelveli and Thothukudi districts, Tamil Nadu) fathers a son with a married woman. This fault causes his ancestors to reach hell and his ancestor rituals to go wrong. Only after he travels to Kanchi and performs the rituals at Sarvatīrtha can his ancestors reach heaven. He himself lives till the end of his life and then attains Śiva's world.

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assigned to Śiva as Ekāmranātha. The location of Sarvatīrtha thus justifies the connection to Śiva, which is reflected by the narrative evolving from Ekāmranātha's mythology (KV chapter 8) and the notion of Śiva's world as epitome of liberation as mentioned in the *phalaśruti* passages. I see this as an example of pronounced reciprocal assignments between the narratives in the KV featuring Viṣṇu, Śiva or Devī as the highest deity and the areas assigned to their local manifestations in Kanchi, where sacred places and the deities' mythologies are set (see section on the *māhātmyas* above).

As far as the myth of origin and a section on the attributed efficacy are concerned, the KV includes the longest and most balanced description of Sarvatīrtha of all three *māhātmyas*. Both the narrative and the mode of locating the place establish a connection to Ekāmranātha and firmly situate the place in his sphere of influence. Within the KV, Sarvatīrtha is one of three bodies of water that are dealt with at length in a separate chapter. One *tīrtha* each lies in one of the three areas assigned to Varadarāja (south-east of Kanchi), Kāmākṣī (centre), and Ekāmranātha (west) and is accordingly contextualised spatially and narratively. As the *tīrtha* located in Ekāmranātha's space, the significance of Sarvatīrtha is thus highlighted and the site attributed a more prominent position than the temple tanks in the compound of the Ekāmranātha temple itself.

Conclusion

This study has explored the mythological narratives of the sacred place Sarvatīrtha in Kanchi from three Sanskrit *māhātmyas* both text-immanently and cross-textually. A particular focus was laid on the interpretation of the site within the texts' understanding of the city's sacred landscape.

In all three texts, the respective passages on Sarvatīrtha are exemplary for the general structure of the respective text and its notion of *tīrthas*. The Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* first introduces the place in the part of the text entirely devoted to bodies of water (KM(V) chapters 5–8) and spatially situates it with reference to Varadarāja's abode on the other side of the city. This particular alignment and a general Vaiṣṇava orientation are then found later in the text when the story of the origin of Sarvatīrtha is integrated into a larger narrative. This superordinate narrative about Gaṅgā has its starting point in the KM(V)'s version of Ekāmranātha's mythology. However, it quickly transforms into a Viṣṇu-oriented narrative, aiming at the explanation of Varadarāja's procession mounted on Garuḍa during the annual *brahmotsava* festival. In everything, the focus lies on the narrative rather the place itself. It thus becomes clear that the exposition of Viṣṇu's superiority takes precedence over the site as *tīrtha*, which serves to locate an event that has happened before in the narrative and to establish a reference to the locality.

The KM(Ś) also presents an obvious contextualisation. The story about the origin of Sarvatīrtha relies upon the geographical closeness to the *liṅga* Tīrtheśvara, which

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is situated at the shores of the tank and is introduced immediately before. The text continuously uses references to a nearby site to map the sacred places in the city following a schema that geographically moves from the south-west to the north-east in Kanchi. The established spatial connection is particularly crucial for *tīrthas*, which are understood as second-order places to *śivaliṅgas* and their efficacy to take effect only in combination with the worship of Śiva. This orientation turns the focus to Śiva and his decisive agency as also reflected in the second episode on Sarvatīrtha, which is integrated into Ekāmranātha's mythology.

A strong sense of locality and belonging to Ekāmranātha's assigned territory in Kanchi and his mythology is found in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*. The Goddess in the form of Pārvatī as Śiva's wife is the main character, but the local goddess Kāmākṣī herself is only referred to as a side note. This may surprise in a text that bears the name "Kāmākṣī" in its title, but is less so given that the text geographically and structurally separates between parts on Viṣṇu, Śiva and Devī, in which each deity's local manifestation occupies the highest position. Within the chapters oriented towards Ekāmranātha, Sarvatīrtha is structurally singled out with a complete chapter devoted to it and thus attributed the most significance among the *tīrthas*. As a sacred body of water, it is understood as independent of other sacred sites, with a particular self-contained story of origin and separate powers attributed to it. The narrative is supplemented with an additional *phalaśruti* story, as it is found in all chapters of the text except the first and the last, to illustrate the power of the focal subject (e.g., Rudraśālā, Ekāmranātha, Sarvatīrtha, etc.) of the respective chapter.

In spite of differences in the mode of narration, all three texts agree on the general sacredness of Sarvatīrtha. They particularly mention the place's extraordinary suitability for ancestor rituals. The most basic unanimous element of all the narratives, however, is an association with Śaiva mythology, and often they evolve from Ekāmranātha's myth. The Śaiva connection is very explicit in the case of the KM(Ś), which as a text itself unquestionably presents a clear Śaiva orientation. Sarvatīrtha is narratively linked to the *liṅga* Tīrtheśvara on the one hand and woven into the mythology of Ekāmranātha on the other. Similarly, a strong Śaiva orientation is found in the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa*. Here the myth of Sarvatīrtha evolves from Ekāmranātha's mythology and is set in his assigned territory in Kanchi due to the location of Sarvatīrtha within this area. Therefore, the notion of a divine hierarchy with Śiva at the top also permeates the narrative of the *tīrtha*. Only an implicit connection to Śaiva mythology is found in the KM(V). The narrative about Gaṅgā, which includes the story about Sarvatīrtha, narratively refers back to Ekāmranātha's mythology but straight away implements a focus on Viṣṇu as Varadarāja and his superiority.

Altogether, the close resemblances on the narrative level suggest a common pool of local mythologies from which the narratives on Sarvatīrtha in the texts are derived. This idea could already be supposed following the review of the major narrative strands of the text attempted in the beginning of this and proves true in the particular case of Sarvatīrtha. While respecting their individual narrative structure, geo-spatial

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outline of Kanchi's sacred landscape, and sectarian orientation, the texts present several overlapping details besides the general association with Śiva and particularly Ekāmranātha. In the case of the element of the assembled gods as/and water bodies giving the name to Sarvatīrtha, the KM(V) and KM(Ś) agree on the essence but apply it in widely different contexts. The Śaiva text introduces a self-contained, combined narrative of Tīrtheśvara and Sarvatīrtha. In contrast, the Vaiṣṇava text generally ignores Śaiva narratives and places, except of its rendering of the Ekāmranātha mythology. This includes the episode in which Śiva sends the Gaṅgā/Kampā to text Pārvatī's devotion to the sand *liṅga*, but not the water that is caught in a vessel. Thus, the reference is missing for the text to continue like the KM(Ś) and KV, which follow up on the contained water of the river Kampā flowing into Sarvatīrtha. I hence interpret the narrative about Gaṅgā in the KM(V) as a means to transit to a Vaiṣṇava setting from the preceding Śaiva material, while contextualising the stories of some sites not yet mentioned but considered important in Kanchi's sacred landscape (such as Sarvatīrtha). Assuming that both narratives circulated, the separate element of the gathered gods was certainly easier to adopt to suit the overall outline of the chapter in the KM(V) than the motif of the Kampā. While I consider it difficult to evaluate if one text has borrowed from the other, I tend to suppose a transfer from the KM(Ś) to the KM(V) due to the subordinate role of Sarvatīrtha and the more complex narrative it is woven into in the latter text. It would be interesting to explore further narratives with regard to "borrowed" motifs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the texts' co-existing narratives.

The issue of narrative adoption is clearer regarding the nearly identical stories of the KM(Ś) and the KV on Sarvatīrtha. In light of the KV's approach to detail Ekāmranātha's (and Varadarāja's) mythology without integrating statements on the Goddess's superiority, the close congruences raise the question if and to what extent the *Kāmākṣīvilāsa* in this case (and more generally, too) bases itself on the Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. This aspect can likewise be extended to include a comparison with the Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya* to explore agreements in the context of Varadarāja's mythology. Given the summarising nature of the KV, it seems less likely that the other two *māhātmyas* have borrowed from the KV. Moreover, it would be worthwhile to examine whether the cross-textual comparative approach can help with a relative chronology of the *māhātmyas* on Kanchi and to what extend certain motifs can be identified as dominant. Likewise, material elements on site in Kanchi that refer to the narratives of a sacred place (e.g., the narrative/*phalaśruti* written on signboards or stone slabs, as sculptures in the temple/shrine) and ritual enactments need further study in the context of the relationship of the co-existing *māhātmyas* on Kanchi.

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Appendix[26]

Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*

punar anyac ca rājendra tīrthānām uttamaṃ param |
sarvatīrtham iti khyātaṃ sarvapāpapraṇāśanam || KM(V) 5.46 ||
purā devās sagandharvāḥ siddhāś ca paramarṣayaḥ |
tīrthāni yāni lokeṣu hradā nadyo nadās tathā || KM(V) 5.47 ||
sarve sametya sahitās tuṣṭuvur yatra keśavam |
kartuṃ vikaluṣāṃ gaṃgāṃ gaurīśāpād amaṃgalām || KM(V) 5.48 ||
tatra tīrthavaraṃ puṇyaṃ sarvatīrthais samanvitam | KM(V) 5.49ab |

ete [']pi tvām mocāyituṃ śāpād asmād amaṃgalāt |
sahitāḥ saṃghaśo yatra sthitvā māṃ tuṣṭuvus surāḥ || KM(V) 27.22 ||
tatrāpi sumahat puṇyaṃ saro bhavatu pāvanam |
tasmin sarasi te sarve vasantv iha mahājñayā || KM(V) 27.23 ||
yasmāt sarve 'pi tīrthe 'smin nivasanty aniśaṃ surāḥ |
tasmāt tat sarvatīrthākhyaṃ saro bhavatu pāvanam || KM(V) 27.24 ||

26 The transcripts are based on the edition of the KM(V) from 1906, on the Devanāgarī editions of the KM(Ś) from 1967 and of the KV from 1968.

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atra bhaktyā naras snātvā kṛtvā tu vapanakriyām |
yaḥ kuryāt pārvaṇaśrāddhaṃ taṃ viśvād aśvamedhinam || KM(V) 27.25 ||

Śaiva *Kāñcīmāhātmya*

adya prabhṛti yuṣmāsu snātvā santarpya mānavāḥ || KM(Ś) 29.14cd ||
devān ṛṣīn pitṝn paścād dattvā vittaṃ ca yogine |
dṛṣṭvā tīrtheśvaraṃ māṃ ca prāpnuyur muktim uttamāṃ || KM(Ś) 29.15 ||
yo bhaktyā vapanaṃ kṛtvā sarvatīrthajale naraḥ |
snātvā pitṝṇāṃ śrāddhādikarma kuryād viśeṣataḥ || KM(Ś) 29.16 ||
brāhmaṇebhyo 'pi yad kiñcid vitīrya kila dakṣiṇām |
mām apy ārādhya tīrasthaṃ sakṛd vā praṇamed yadi || KM(Ś) 29.17 ||
tasyaiva pitaras tṛptā māṃ vrajanti na saṃśayaḥ |
iti dattvā varaṃ śambhuḥ pratijñām akarot punaḥ || KM(Ś) 29.18 ||
sarvatīrthe sakṛt snānaṃ sakṛd ekāmradarśanam |
sambhaved yadi sarveṣāṃ samsāro na bhavet punaḥ || KM(Ś) 29.19 ||
bhuktiś ca teṣām muktiś ca puruṣārthacatuṣṭayaṃ |
bhūyān mama kṛpā teṣu paripūrṇāstu nityaśaḥ || KM(Ś) 29.20 ||
brahmahatyā vīrahatyā bhrūṇahatyā ca tatkṣaṇāt |
pitṛhatyā ca naśyet tu mātṛhatyā ca goghnatā || KM(Ś) 29.21 ||
snānāc ca sarvatīrthe 'smin tīrtheśasya ca darśanāt |
narasya yasya kasyāpi naśyeyuḥ pātakāni ca || KM(Ś) 29.22 ||
pratijñām īdṛśīṃ kṛtvā kṣaṇād antarhitaś śivaḥ |
tadā prabhṛti tīrthe 'smin hatyādoṣavaśaṃ gatāḥ || KM(Ś) 29.23 ||
vimuktā bahavas snātvā dṛṣṭvā devaṃ ca śaṅkaraṃ |
prahlādaḥ pitṛhatyāyā mukto 'tra snānamātrataḥ || KM(Ś) 29.24 ||
vibhīṣaṇaś ca vai bhātṛhatyādoṣān mahattarāt |
tathā paraśurāmo 'pi vīrahatyāvimuktaye || KM(Ś) 29.25 ||
snānamātrāt sarvatīrthe tīrtheśasyāgrataś śubhe |
mukto 'bhūd rāvaṇāriś ca rāmo bhrātrāsahāgataḥ || KM(Ś) 29.26 ||
hātvā droṇakṛpācāryapramukhān arjunas tathā |
snātvā sarvottame sarvatīrthe vigatakalmaṣaḥ || KM(Ś) 29.27 ||
babhūva śivatattvajñaḥ kīrtim avyāhatām yayau |
aśvatthāmnā ca vai snātaṃ bhrūṇahatyā vimuktaye || KM(Ś) 29.28 ||
ye cānye manujā loke pitṛbhrātṛvadhaiṣiṇaḥ |
adyāpi sarvatīrthe 'smin snātvā tīrtheśvaraṃ gatāḥ || KM(Ś) 29.29 ||
hatyādoṣād vimucyas te striyo martyāś ca bhūriśaḥ | KM(Ś) 29.30ab |

bhadrakāḷīṃ samāhūya prāha śītāṃśuśekharaḥ |
ayi bhadre priyaṃ devyās samyagācaritaṃ tvayā || KM(Ś) 45.109 ||
muñcākhilaṃ jalaṃ śīghraṃ karasthāt svakapālataḥ |
yasmān mandīkṛtaṃ toyaṃ praḷayāmbusamaṃ tvayā || KM(Ś) 45.110 ||
tasmāt praḷayamandākhyā khyātā tiṣṭha mamāgrataḥ |
ity uktayā tathā sarvaṃ jalam muktaṃ kapālataḥ || KM(Ś) 45.111 ||
svasya paścimadigbhāge haribrahmādisevitaḥ |

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tajjalaṃ sarvatīrthākhyaṃ stambhayāmāsa tejasā || KM(Ś) 45.112 ||
brahmāpātyādipāpaghnaṃ tat kāñcyāṃ sarvatīrthakam |
tasyaiva smaraṇān nṝṇāṃ jarāmaraṇanāśanam || KM(Ś) 45.113 ||

Kāmākṣīvilāsa

śivāyai prītim āsthāya tasyā bhītiviktaye |
svajaṭhābhārajāṃ gaṅgāṃ bhūmau praḷayarūpiṇīm || KV 9.12 ||
dharāguptāṃ tataḥ kṛtvā bhūmau pādena śaṅkaraḥ |
umākalyāṇam āśritya babhau kalyāṇaveṣataḥ || KV 9.13 ||
tataḥ praḷayabandhinyā kampāyāḥ praḷayāgame |
pūrvaṃ praḷayanāśāya nikṣiptaṃ yatkapālakam || KV 9.14 ||
kampāmbhasā samāyuktaṃ yāvat pātrāntavāriṇā |
tatkapālaṃ babhau tatra vimuktapraḷayodakam || KV 9.15 ||
atha tattīrthamāhātmyaṃ śrutvā gaury aṣṭavārṣikā |
navayauvanasaundaryaṃ kāṃkṣantī śaṅkareṇa ca || KV 9.16 ||
anugrahītavākyoktavidhinā sā ca pārvatī |
tasya tīrthasya sopānasamyagāvaraṇādikān || KV 9.17 ||
kārayitvā mahāgaurī tatas sā devaśilpinā |
sārdhatrikoṭitīrthaikyaṃ gatayā kaṃpayā saha || KV 9.18 ||
sadā miḷitatīrthatvāt sarvatīrtham iti śrutām |
divyābhidhāṃ pratiṣṭhāpya tasya tīrthasya bhūpate || KV 9.19 ||
tasmin tīrthe [']tha sā snātvā navayauvanaśālinī |
saundaryayuktā sā gaurī gatvā śobhāṃ sumaṅgaḷām || KV 9.20 ||
taptakāṃcanasaṃkāśāṃ kāmākṣīṃ kāmadāyinīm | KV 9.21ab |

namaskṛtyātha tīrthāya mahāgaurī varaṃ dadau |
yātrayā sarvatīrtheṣu snānato yat phalaṃ nṛṇām || KV 9.32 ||
darśanāt sarvatīrthasya tat phalaṃ cāśnute śivam |
iti datvā varaṃ gaurī punar nāthāntikaṃ mudā || KV 9.33 ||
samāgatya praṇamyeśaṃ tasya vāmāsanaṃ mudā |
gatvā sā nityakalyāṇī babhau śṛṅgāraveṣataḥ || KV 9.34 ||
tadādi vartate tatra sarvatīrthaṃ manoramam |
tasyāṃ kāñcyāṃ yatra yatra santi tīrthāni bhūpate || KV 9.35 ||
tatra tatroktakāleṣu snānato yat phalaṃ labhet |
sarvatīrthe sakṛt snānāt tatsarvaphalam aśnute || KV 9.36 ||
purā tasmin sarvatīrthe bahavo mokṣakāṃkṣiṇaḥ |
snātvā vimuktāḥ pāpaiś ca gatās te śāmbhavaṃ padam || KV 9.37 ||

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Connected Places, Networks of Shrines: Ahobilam in the Nets of Spatial Relationships[1]

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Diverse networks of groups of shrines constitute an integral element of Hindu religious landscapes, in which, to quote Eck, "nothing stands isolated" (Eck 2012, 35). The tools to explore such spatial relationships are for example provided by methods of literary cartography, in view of which what maps the space is a narrative (Tally 2014, 1–3). Recently, a growing interest in issues related to spatiality and place, and their cultural constructions throughout history and regions, can also be noticed in the field of South Asian studies (e.g., Feldhaus 2003, Selby and Peterson 2008, Eck 2012, Young 2014, Nowicka 2019a, Nowicka 2019b, Galewicz 2019). In this particular context, the equal carriers of the temples' bonds are narratives, rituals and festivals (Preston 1980). The idea of movement between particular sites is in fact executed by pilgrims who take an imagined or real journey from one sacred place to another, thus actively participating in the establishment of the sacred map of India (Eck 2012, 5). Moreover, the footsteps of imagined or real travelers, be they either mythical, divine or historical figures, or common devotees, but also the paths sketched by objects or ideas (Galewicz 2020, 27–30), frame territories of various range and meaning, which are always important for their inhabitants. Taking a beloved god as the destination of peregrinations, the narratives involving the notion of moving along a reiterated route are usually emotionally charged. However, the sets of places perceived as demarcating a conceptually coherent region might also be produced without the help of a story encompassing various locations, but, simply, through counting or listing the sites, sometimes under a joint name (Feldhaus 2003, 127). The places might be also grouped by means of replication, stating that they are replicas of, physically connected to, transplanted from or containing elements from other sites situated in other parts of India (Feldhaus 2003, 158; see also Branfoot's contribution to this volume). Last but not least, the sites might be thought together due to the lay of the land and/or the prospect of a safe journey between them. This might be the case if they are situated along the same river or a hardly accessible

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range, by the seashore or amongst a dense forest. Then it pays to visit them in a row in the company of others, even though not all the temples on the trail are equally important for individuals taking part in the journey. Localized myths inscribed into natural surroundings of certain sites are usually the topic of *māhātmya* texts. These texts outline sacred areas with the major aim of drawing devotees. As literary maps, *māhātmyas* are also often the products of the particular political and economic conditions of a given temple. It is assumed that the clustering of sacred spaces in *māhātmya* narratives gives an individual site, even if it is in fact less frequented than others, significant recognition (Eck 2012, 34).

In this essay, I shall outline the patterns of such spatial relationships by tracing historically and contextually variable modes of constructing a meaningful space of Ahobilam (Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh). As a center of the Narasiṃha cult with a Pāñcarātra form of worship, currently the site attracts a limited number of pilgrims all the year round, particularly on the occasion of the "great festival" (*mahotsava*), which takes place in March/April. Due to its location on the slopes of the Nallamalla Hills, this Vaiṣṇava center has been until now associated with undisturbed forests inhabited by tigers and the indigenous population of the Chenchu hunter-gatherers. The remoteness of this area has significantly affected the inflow of pilgrims but has also empowered the development of a distinct form of Narasiṃha cult, deeply ingrained in local beliefs. The number of visitors, hailing predominantly from the region, cannot be compared to the masses reaching many other big and more easily accessible Vaiṣṇava temples of Andhra Pradesh, for instance Tirupati, yet it has been substantially increasing since the 1970s, when the village was connected to the town of Allagadda by a concrete road. As I will argue, the significance of this particular case study lies in the fact that it concerns a place which, on the one hand, due to its peripheral location, may somehow evoke the Turnerian "place out of there", the sacredness of which arises from its remoteness (Turner 1973), or, as Preston put it, a place of particular magnetism emerging from the risk inherent in the journey to it (Preston 1992, 35–38). However, on the other hand, as the place is difficult to reach, it has become involved in a number of territorial interrelations discernible on various scales and in various contexts. I shall focus on the system of space given in the Sanskrit text that glorifies Ahobilam, the *Ahobila-māhātmya* (henceforth AM), which takes the natural environment as a frame of reference, mainly understood as being shaped by the Nallamalla range. The concept of a cluster of sites situated along the range (Srisailam, Ahobilam, Tirupati, Kalahasti) that I am going to discuss is by no means confined exclusively to the Ahobilam tradition. Between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries, these religious centers received particularly rich endowments from the Vijayanagara rulers (Parabrahma Sastri 2014, 381). Throughout the region of Andhra, the set of these particular sites has been imagined collectively as a set situated along the body of the reclining snake Śeṣa, who assumed the form of the mountain range —Srisailam lying on its tail, Ahobilam on its back, Tirupati on its hood, and Kalahasti at its mouth. These sites

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together constitute a pilgrimage circuit stretching from north to south (Eck 2012, 251–252, 317). Remarkably, however, the AM seems to highlight especially Ahobilam's connection to Srisailam. In addition, it substitutes the southern Kalahasti with Mahanandi (Nandyāśrama) situated to the north of Ahobilam. This preference of the north over the south, or, more precisely, of the Śaiva realm over the Vaiṣṇava[2] when defining a territory meaningful for Ahobilam tradition, raises a number of questions, which I am going to discuss below. Can the literary cartography of the AM be translated into the contemporary religious landscape of Nallamalla Hills? What were the factors which affected imagining Ahobilam as involved in this particular network? Were the religious affiliations of any importance in regard to pilgrimage circulation of this area in medieval times?

Central Points and Meaningful Peripheries: Ahobilam in the Nets of Spatial Connections

Before discussing the AM's concept of organizing the "greater" territory of Ahobilam in reference to other sites set along the same mountain range, I shall briefly sketch other patterns which locate Ahobilam either in the center of territorial relationships, mention it as an element of cross-regional socio-spatial schemes or as belonging to other temples' networks. The pattern, which involves Ahobilam in terms of the nodal point of a certain territory, concerns two local groupings: (a) the unique cluster of nine Narasiṃha temples, which also has given the site an alternative joint name, *navanarasiṃhakṣetra* (the area of the nine Narasiṃhas), and (b) the space marked by the hunting procession/festival called Paruveta. The patterns which present Ahobilam either as participating in cross-regional groupings or in the networks of other temples, at least from a current point of view, involve crossing linguistic barriers. These are (c) the widely recognized set of Vaiṣṇava holy places extolled by the Tamil Āḻvārs (seventh to ninth centuries) and later on codified into 108 holy places (*divyadeśas*; ca thirteenth century; Young 2014), and (d) the network of three sites – Kanchipuram, Sholingur (Ghaṭikādri), Ahobilam— outlined in the third chapter of the Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava *Kāñcīmāhātmya*. Although produced in different spatio-temporal contexts, these two latter concepts agree not only in the use of the notions associated with movement to produce the space to which Ahobilam belongs, but also in mapping Ahobilam on its fringes. As their purpose was not to praise Ahobilam as a single spot worthy of attention and visiting, it is not surprising that the narratives promoting these particular sets of dispersed sites do not treat Ahobilam as central in the net of interrelations forming the sacred landscape they envisage. However, this is a very peripheral location, which in light of literary

2 Ahobilam and Tirupati are Vaiṣṇava centers of worship; Srisailam, Kalahasti and Mahanandi are Śaiva ones.

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cartography, proves the site's special meaning for a mapping plot (Piatti and Hurni 2011, 218).

a) Nine Shrines of Narasiṃha

The belief that Ahobilam is the unique site of nine Narasiṃhas has been fostering its popularity for centuries. However, the sacred space nowadays traversed by pilgrims actually covers a territory marked by ten shrines, each devoted to a different, locally conceived aspect of the deity: i.e., Ahobilanarasiṃha, Bhārgavanarasiṃha, Jvālānarasiṃha, Yogānandanarasiṃha, Chatravātanarasiṃha, Karañjanarasiṃha, Pāvananarasiṃha, Mālolanarasiṃha, Vārāhanarasiṃha, Prahlādavaradanarasiṃha. The temples are dispersed between the so-called Lower Ahobilam and Upper Ahobilam. The former more or less complies with the territory of the village and hosts the Prahlādavarada temple, which is dedicated to the mild (*saumya*) aspect of the god and is excluded from the pattern of nine. The latter chiefly refers to a forested area dotted with the rest of the shrines, which spreads up to the hill, where the earliest temple at the site, dedicated to Narasiṃha in his ferocious (*ugra*) aspect (Ahobilanarasiṃhasvāmi), is located, probably at the spot which had been sacred for the indigenous hunter-gathering tribe of the Chenchus (Sontheimer 1985, 145–146). Although most of the shrines in Ahobilam predate the Vijayanagara period, the center reached its peak under the rule of the Vijayanagara kings, from the times of the Sāḷuva dynasty onwards. The founder of the latter, Sāḷuva Nararasiṃha (reigned 1485–1491), was portrayed by poets as born out of grace of Narasiṃha of Ahobilam, his family deity (Dębicka-Borek 2014). Extending their patronage over the site was particularly important for the next Vijayanagara dynasty of the Tuḷuvas, whose rulers successively expanded their territory into the Rayalaseema region of Andhra, where Ahobilam lies. A Telugu inscription at the site refers to a visit paid by Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya (reigned 1509–1529), who not only donated riches to the deity, but also, as some scholars believe (e.g., Rajagopalan 2005, Raman 1975, 80–81), might have played a key role in organizing the activities of the Ahobila *maṭha*.[3] Till the end of

3 The past of this monastic religious institution, which to date governs local temples and has a number of branches throughout South India, is unclear. According to traditional accounts promulgated by the *maṭha* itself, it was established in the fourteenth century. Its first pontiff (*jīyar*), Vaṇ Śaṭhakopa Jīyar, is believed to have come to Ahobilam from Kanchipuram due to Narasiṃha's call. However, as Appadurai claims (below), the establishment of the *maṭha* should be rather linked with a form of rivalry between the Śrīvaiṣṇava Sanskrit and Tamil schools in Tirupati in the early sixteenth century, which made some groups of leaders associated with the Vaṇ Śaṭhakopa *maṭha* in Tirupati to shift to the Kurnool district of Andhra to look for new opportunities and areas of religious activities. Thanks to its association with the Vijayanagara rulers, in the span of several decades the *maṭha* became a leading center of Śrīvaiṣṇavism in Andhra (Appadurai 1977, 69–70). According to Sastry, the *maṭha* might have been established earlier, during the reign of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha, or Malikārjuna (reigned 1446–1465) at the earliest, that is in the second half of the fifteenth century (Sastry 1998, 214–215).

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the sixteenth century, and with the support of the Vijayanagara kings, for whom association with religious institutions was essential for the policy of extending power into bordering zones, the monastery became crucial for increasing the influences of Vaṭakalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the region of Andhra (Appadurai 1977, 69–71). On a local level, the proselytizing activities of the first heads of the monastic institution (*jīyars*) are nonetheless associated to a significant degree with attempts at drawing indigenous groups of the Chenchu into the temple order (Vasantha 2001, 48). This combination of a Brahmanic tradition with local beliefs in fact led to the mutual permeation of certain ideas fed off of Narasiṃha's predatory features, which are till today particularly maintained on a folk level, but also discernible in the Ahobilam temple culture (Sontheimer 1985, 146–149).

Noteworthy in this context is the pattern of the nine shrines, which organizes the topography of the site, especially in terms of perceiving it as being worth visiting due to its salvific power (Jacobsen 2016, 354). This pattern also appears to be the most powerful in the process of transforming the area of Ahobilam into a meaningful space, as it reflects the long-lasting tensions at the site. By the use of the idea of Viṣṇu's capability to manifest himself in multiple forms in many places, the pattern allows to accommodate, under locally rooted forms of Narasiṃha (e.g., AM 4.8–54), the already remodelled traditions which predated the Brahmanic culture at the spot. Additionally, it gives Ahobilam a sense of coherence, clearly expressed in its collective name *navanarasiṃhakṣetra*. Considering our rather poor knowledge concerning the development of Ahobilam prior to the sixteenth century,[4] it is difficult to estimate how old the custom of denoting Ahobilam through reference to the set of nine is. What we may presume is that it precedes the erection of the last and the tenth temple at the site, i.e., the Prahlādavarada temple of Lower Ahobilam, the construction of which possibly started during the reign of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha (fifteenth/sixteenth century; Vasantha 2001, 86). The pattern inscribes the complex of Ahobilam into the trend observed in the region of Andhra in many other places, e.g., the "greater" territory of Srisailam (*śrīśailakṣetra*) with its eight gateways, the nine Nandi shrines in Nandyal, the nine Brahmā (dedicated to Śiva) temples in Alampur, the nine Janārdana temples in East Godavari district, the nine Śiva shrines in Bhairavakona/-konda (Prakasam district), etc. As evident in the case of Srisailam, the scheme may connote a variously conceptualized perfect space marked by eight directions and the center within them (Reddy 2014, 62–65). What is interesting in regard to Ahobilam is that the extension of the already fixed grouping of nine into ten appears not to spoil its imagined boundaries claimed by its Brahmanic spiritual masters. Contrarily, it might be interpreted as enhancing its consistence and anchoring the distinctive form of worship in the mainstream Vaiṣṇava traditions through aligning the native forms of Narasiṃha with the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.

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4 From the sixteenth century onwards the production of inscriptions at the site significantly increased as a result of the patronage of Vijayanagara rulers.

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Fig. 1: A map of Navanarasiṃhakṣetra currently on display in Ahobilam (photo by the author).

b) Sites Joined by the Paruveta Procession

Given that the concept of connecting the sites can be also rendered by a festival/ritual storyline, we may assume such a function in regard to the Ahobilam-bounded narrative on Narasiṃha's marriage to a Chenchu girl, or, as a matter of fact, one of its local variants, which, commonly in popular imagination, serves as a scenario behind the hunting festival/procession known as Paruveta. Devised most likely after establishing the patronage of Vijayanagara kings over the site, the festival is celebrated annually for forty days, starting from the day after *makarasaṃkrānti* (mid-January). The procession, which carries Narasiṃha, visits over thirty sites located around Ahobilam.[5] The most important among them is the Lower Ahobilam with its Prahlādavarada temple, from which the procession departs and to which it returns when the festival ends. In line with the oral tradition, which perceives Narasiṃha as a god but also a human, the trek re-enacts his trip to the woods, during which he

5 These are (in order of visiting): Lower Ahobilam, Bacheppali, Kondampalli, Krishnapur, Kotakandukur, Marripalli, Yadawada, Alamur, Thimmannapalli, Narasapuram, Muttaluru, Nallavagupalli, Bachapuram, Nagireddypalli, Padakandla, Allagada, S. Lingamdinne, Saravaypalli, M.V. Nagar (Allagada), Chinthakunta, Devarayapuram, Gubagundam, Jambuladinne, Mandalur, Nakkaladinne, Chandalur, Chilakalur, Thippareddypalli, T. Lingamdinne, Nagulavaram, Tuvvapalle, Rudravaram, Lower Ahobilam (I received the list in 2018; see also Vasantha 2001. For an account of Paruveta celebration at the beginning of the twentieth century see Ramaswamy Ayyangar 1916, 112–114).

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personally extends the invitation to the wedding with a Chenchu girl to his local kith and kin. However, from the temple's point of view, the celebrations retain a royal aspect characteristic of a ritual hunt described in Sanskrit narratives and hinted by prescriptions of the late Pāñcarātra *saṃhitās* (Dębicka-Borek 2021). This is expressed, for instance, by providing the deity's icon with a ruler's knife and turban, and by the presence of Chenchu archers in his retinue. In addition, the deity is taken to "social units" far from the temple, so that he may symbolically demarcate his territory and establish relations with its inhabitants (Orr 2004, 441–442, 456). From this angle, the space framed by the Paruveta procession differs from the space marked by the cluster of Narasiṃha temples, not only in regard to its range, but also in regard to its meaning: whilst the group of shrines makes the site appropriate for Brahmanic norms and gives it recognition, the territory enclosed by the procession denotes the orb of Narasiṃha's influence, mirroring at the same time the political agenda of the Vijayanagara kings, who dealt with the newly annexed areas with the help of religious institutions.

c) 108 *Divyadeśas*

Ahobilam owes its appearance on the list of the *divyadeśas* to Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār (ninth century), who extolled it, under its Tamil name Ciṅkavēḷkuṉṟam, in the *Periyatirumoḻi* (1.7.1–10). Noteworthy in this case, despite its physical bearings on the border of Tamil and Telugu speaking regions physically demarcated by the mountains dividing the ancient Tamil kingdoms from the central plateau, the list of the *divyadeśas* projects Ahobilam as belonging to an imagined land essentially appealing to Tamils (Young 2014, 345). The geographical borders of this land, stretching from modern Tirupati to Kanyakumari, where Tamil language is in use, were already outlined in the initial verses of the *Tolkāppiyam* (Selby and Peterson 2008, 4). However, in Young's view, the poems of the Āḻvārs refer neither to an actual map of holy sites nor to pilgrimage networks already established, but their aim is to highlight particular places where Viṣṇu dwells to consolidate his devotees, who are dispersed across the area, and to attract more devotees to the community in the making (Young 2014, 345–360). If so, an outlying location of Ahobilam seems to play a crucial role in extending the northern borders of the Vaiṣṇava realm. This strategy is crystallized in another spatial system, which as time went on, got interlocked with that promoted by the Āḻvārs. After the number of *divyadeśas* as 108 had been established as a normative framework of pilgrimage for Śrīvaiṣṇavas, the sites sung by the Āḻvārs were also grouped into smaller geographical regions (Tam. *nāṭu*). In accordance with this pattern, Ahobilam together with ten further sites, namely Tirupati (Veṅkaṭa), Ayodhya, Badrinath, Mathura, Dvaraka, etc., was ascribed to the region to the north of the land of the Tamils denoted by the name Vaṭanāṭu ("northern country"). Scholars agree that this concept uses the sites perceived as "northern", yet important for Tamils, as a device to symbolically shift

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the influence of Śrīvaiṣṇavism to a pan-Indian scale, providing the community with a wider area of movement (Dutta 2010, 19; Young 2014, 344).

d) The Route: Kanchipuram – Ahobilam – Sholingur (Ghaṭikācala) – Kanchipuram

The network of temples advertised by the third chapter of the *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, refers to the three shrines of Narasiṃha counted among the 108 *divyadeśas*: the Narasiṃha shrine within the premises of the Varadarāja temple of Kanchipuram, the Narasiṃha shrine in Ghaṭikācala/Ghaṭikādri (modern Sholingur, Ranipet district of Tamil Nadu) and the collective of Narasiṃha shrines of Ahobilam. In contrast to the above-mentioned patterns, it shows Ahobilam as participating in the territory significant for a particular, more recognizable temple, that is the Varadarāja temple in Kanchipuram. The narrative delineates an imagined route traversed by Narasiṃha, who in pursuit of demons leaves his shrine in the Varadarāja structure and proceeds to Ahobilam, with a stop in Ghaṭikācala on his way back again to Kanchi. The glorification of Kanchipuram might be seen as referring to a circuit partially implied by the legends maintained till today by the Ahobila *maṭha*. According to this narrative the *maṭha's* first *jīyar*, after completing his education in Kanchi, set off to Ahobilam (Raman 1975, 80). On the other hand, if we refer to the assumptions of literary cartography, a frontier location of Ahobilam on the map sketched by the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* author/s triggers questions about its specific meaning for this particular narrative. Considering that as if to avoid bloodshed in Kanchi, the text sends Narasiṃha off to Ahobilam to slaughter the demon, Ahobilam's outlying location appears to overlap with its long-lasting perception as imbued with a unique ambience. This ambience has been associated with the fact of hosting an *ugra* aspect of Narasiṃha and an event of killing Hiraṇyakaśipu there, with which Ahobilam is attributed by local traditions. This particular episode uses yet another technique of connecting places. To destroy the demon, Narasiṃha creates a multitude of replicas of himself, thus giving the impression of being present in various places within the borders of Ahobilam (Dębicka-Borek 2019b). Noteworthy, the network of shrines promoted by the *Kāñcīmāhātmya*—most likely to draw routes to be followed by pilgrims and to legitimize the Varadarāja temple's connections with the Ahobila *maṭha*, again under the favorable politics of Vijayanagara kings—is not only imaginary, but is reflected in the physical features of the sacred landscape. The strip of land stretching between Kanchipuram and Ahobilam is exceptionally rich in Narasiṃha temples. This fact corroborates Hardy's idea of outlining a religiously cohesive area by means of a plot implying the deity's accessibility to all on the account of his journey (Hardy 1993, 166). Moreover, inscriptions commemorating *jīyars* of Ahobilam, a mural depicting the nine Narasiṃhas found on the walls of the Varadarāja temple, as well as the existence to date of the branch of Ahobila *maṭha* at the site, confirm the circulation of people and ideas between these two places since the sixteenth century. In addition, this indicates a growing role of the *jīyars* of

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Ahobilam in the process of formation of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. As this exchange goes beyond the land of the Tamils (see above), Hardy refers to the area produced by Narasiṃha's itinerary as a "supraregion" (Hardy 1993, 166).

To sum up, the instances of various modes of relations concerning Ahobilam I have outlined so far involved various scales and contexts of producing meaningful groupings and networks. The most localized pattern of the nine Narasiṃha temples at the site has organized the sacred space of Ahobilam and, most likely, opened the ways to accommodate the already transformed local cults into the Brahmanic mainstream. The widely known trans-regional scheme of the holy sites extolled by the Āḻvārs, later on codified in the group of 108 and divided into smaller geographical units of the imagined Tamil land, reflects the importance of Ahobilam in strategies aimed at extension of influences of South Indian Vaiṣṇavism. In turn the route sketched by the *Kāñcīmāhātmya*, where Narasiṃha goes from Kanchipuram to Ahobilam and back, with a short stop in Sholingur, points to Ahobilam's participation in other temples' networks, including those belonging to other regions.

Now, let us turn to the scheme found in the first chapter of the AM, which emphasizes the sites that are dispersed, yet located along the same mountain range and in the same Telugu-speaking region.

Along the Nallamalla Range: Srisailam, Mahanandi, Ahobilam, Tirupati

There is an inner logic to the way the AM author/s mapped Ahobilam, with the description of its territory roughly shifting from the macro- to micro-scale. Whilst the first chapter of the AM appears to focus on presenting Ahobilam against the backdrop of its natural surroundings,[6] the fourth chapter deals with the features of the nine Narasiṃhas whose abodes constitute the sacred space (*narasiṃhakṣetra*) and who are confined to what today roughly conforms the Upper Ahobilam complex. The two patterns do not interfere: neither does the former passage allude to the nine Narasiṃhas as a collective, nor does the latter emphasize the role of the range in the organization of their territory, focusing rather on the immediate locality. As already mentioned, the initial chapter of the AM links Ahobilam with the other three sites located along the same range, which are Mahanandi (Nadyāśrama) and Srisailam to the north, and Tirupati (Veṅkaṭa) to the south. Enumerating Nandyāśrama instead of Kalahasti makes this concept different from its popular version known throughout Andhra Pradesh till date.

In brief, the first chapter of the *Ahobilamāhātmya* (AM 1.40–77; see the appendix below), defines the sacred area (*kṣetra*) of Ahobilam as measuring three by three

6 This happens mainly in reference to the so called Garuḍācala/Garuḍādri/Garuḍaśaila, which, depending on the context, refers either to the *kṣetra* itself or to the mountain situated within its boundaries (Garuḍācala/Garuḍādri), or to the slopes of Nallamalla Hills (Garuḍaśaila).

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yojanas (40). It is dotted with high peaks that are compared to "bridges over the ocean of misery" (41). One of the peaks resembles the Meru mountain (42). It used to be the pillar of Hiraṇyakaśipu's palace (43). This is also where Narasiṃha destroyed the demon and and till date resides in his blazing form (*jvālā*) (44–45). After the murder, as the text continues, Narasiṃha washed his blood-stained hands in a pool called Raktakuṇḍa ("red pool"/ "vessel of blood"), which is situated nearby (46–48ab). To pacify the angry god, the gods sent down the river Bhavanāśinī ("remover of births") (48cd–50). Next, the plot moves to the north of Ahobilam to briefly mention Nandyāśrama, another site which lies along the Garuḍācala range. This is where Nandikeśvara once performed austerities to please Śiva. As a result, Śiva manifested himself at the spot and shared this land among his attendants, ascribing proper names to certain local ponds (52–54). Still further to the north along the range, there is the famous Śrīśaila (Srisailam), the abode of the self-manifested (*svayambhū*) Śiva, who left the Kailāsa mountain to live there (55–56). The territory in question stretches up to the river Kṛṣṇā, beyond which another range of mountains raises (57). All the natural elements and beings who belong to the range are worth of worship due to Narasiṃha's greatness (58–59ab). The next section of the account opens with a question posed by the sages to Nārada about the precise location of Narasiṃha's holy place and the source of its power (59cdef). Nārada begins his answer with sketching the mythical map of the earth, on which Jambudvīpa is located. Then he zooms in on its southern hemisphere and continues with a short description of Ahobilam and the Garuḍa mountain (Garuḍācala) situated within the boundaries of its sacred area. As he explains, the term Garuḍācala serves as an appellation of both the *kṣetra* and the mountain (60–65). He depicts the *kṣetra* as full of various species of fauna and flora (66–73). Although "barbarians" (*mleccha*) equipped with bows and arrows live there, it is splendid due to the presence of sages, Brahmins and celestial beings (74–76ab). The account ends with a short reference to Veṅkaṭācala, which is situated ten *yojanas* to the South (77cd–79).

The above passage outlines the framework of a local version of the pan-Indian Narasiṃha myth—expanded upon further in consecutive chapters. Its episodes are localized, as they are imposed on elements of the landscape dominated by hills. This approach seems to transpire already from the fact that in contrast to other passages, Ahobilam here is often denoted with the term Garuḍādri/Garuḍācala, "The Mountain of Garuḍa," alluding to one of the local narratives, in which Garuḍa performed austerities there (AM 1.64–65). The account of the sacred geography of Ahobilam begins, however, quite conventionally for a text of the *māhātmya* genre, with emphasizing the site's powers, attractive for potential visitors. The site grants salvation as is implied by the mention of peaks resembling a bridge (*setu*), which is a common metaphor pointing to a holy site (*tīrtha*) as joining the earth with heaven, the so-called "crossing" (Eck 1981, 325). A mention of a particular peak, whose immovable shadow navigates the released devotees, seems to serve the same aim (AM 1.41–42). Comparing it to the Meru mountain, which is the archetypical cosmic mountain

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deemed in Hindu traditions as the axis mundi connecting the earth with heavens and netherworlds, and encircled by other mountains (Eck 2012, 122–124), equates Ahobilam with the center of the world. A further remark on Narasiṃha who in his blazing from (*jvālākara*) resides in the area which used to be the ruins of Hiraṇyakaśipu's palace, evokes Jvālānarasiṃha, one of the nine Narasiṃhas, who is associated with a sensation of fiery anger, which he experienced after killing the demon. In terms of physical realities, the verses refer to the mountain called Acalacchāyāmeru, at the base of which the shrine of Jvālānarasiṃha is located. A nearby pond known as Raktakuṇḍa, to date visited by devotees, is shown as possessing miraculous powers preventing reincarnation, as Narasiṃha washed off his demon-blood-stained claws after the slaughter there.[7] The power of removing sins is attributed as well to the Bhavanāśinī river, which runs through Ahobilam. Equalled with the Gaṅgā in terms of salvific power, she is said to have flown down there in order to tame Narasiṃha who, after destroying the demon, threatened the world (Dębicka-Borek 2019a).

The spatial perspective of the AM is enlarged as the narrative switches to the myths pertaining to other sites, namely Nandyāśrama and Śrīśaila. Although in each of the three sites, Ahobilam, Nandyāśrama and Śrīśaila, the appropriate god manifested himself, they fall into a shared space of the length of one hundred *yojanas* (AM 1.51), spreading along the "great Garuḍaśaila," sanctified by the presence of sages on its right side. The northern boundaries of this shared territory are articulated by the set of topoi characteristic for the Purāṇic cosmology which define the realm of Bhāratavarṣa, dealt also in brief in AM 1.60–63. These are a mountain range (the Himalayas) and a river (Ganges) (Ali 2008, 123–126). This scheme is transferred onto the regional scale via the motif of the mighty Kṛṣṇā river, which meanders near Śrīśaila, where the mountains that form the natural border of the area end (AM 1.57).

The AM clearly states that the connection between the sites along the mountain range is attributed to Narasiṃha, whose greatness impacts both the elements of its landscape and living beings who inhabit the range (AM 1.57). Therefore, Ahobilam, which is perceived as the epicenter of the deity's power, is a central spot of the area (AM 1.59). This does not mean, however, that Ahobilam is shown as an unquestionably serene site. Its disturbing ambience—which after all contributed to the site's recognition throughout the region—is hinted at by a remark on hunting tribals (*mlecchas*) who live in the surrounding forests (AM 1.74). In line with the conventions of the literary genre, this remark is balanced by the assurance that also sages, Brahmins and mythical celestial ladies reside there (AM 1.75–76ab).

How shall we interpret the AM's treatment of Ahobilam's spatial connections? What does it say about the socio-religious history of the region in the medieval

7 The *Payoṣṇīmāhātmya* locates the motif of Narasiṃha washing his claws stained with blood on the banks of the Purna River (Feldhaus 1995, 176–177).

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period? Why does the cluster of sites promoted by the AM include Nandyāśrama, a site which does not seem to play any role in other narratives related to Ahobilam?

Trying to tackle these questions, I shall start with some observations concerning the centers highlighted in the spatial construct advertised by the AM in reference to their objective connections. The toponym Nandyāśrama denotes the present Mahanandi, the site of "Great Nandi," situated forty kilometers north of Ahobilam on the fringes of the Nallamalla Hills. This temple was among the famous pilgrimage centers of the Vijayanagara empire, as it is mentioned in a copper-plate inscription of Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya dated to 1508, which records his visit there (Chattopadhyaya 1998, 105). A "Mahānandi-tīrtha" appears also in the earlier inscription of Śivānanda, dating to the eleventh century. Ramesan remarks that the name of the temple possibly derives from a huge sculpture of Śiva's bull, Nandi, which rests in front of the temple (Ramesan 2000, 51–53). AM 1.52 seems to suggest another possibility, connecting it with Nandikeśvara, a figure not necessarily representing the bull, but a human, sometimes imagined with a bull's head, who attends Śiva (Orelskaya 1997).

The temple lies within an eighteen-kilometer radius of eight further temples dedicated to Nandi, all together creating the complex known as Navanandi. Currently, the fame of the Mahanandi shrine also arises from its natural scenery: it is located in a natural gorge against the background of the mountains. The site is rich in springs and water bodies. This feature is perhaps hinted at in AM 1.54, which mentions Śiva assigning names to various pools. It seems that Mahanandi's political connections with Ahobilam go back to the patronage of the Nandyala chiefs, the feudatories of Vijayanagara kings since the times of Sadāśiva Rāya of the Tuḷuva dynasty, whose preceptor was probably the fifth *jīyar* of Ahobila *maṭha*. They were Vaiṣṇavas, yet supported Śaivism as well. Their family name was taken from the area called "the abode of Nandi" (Skt. Nandyāla = Nandi+ālaya, contemporary Nandyal), which they patronized (Soma Sekha Rao and Bose Babu 2014, 135). However, both Ahobilam and Mahanandi are eulogized in the consecutive chapters of the *Śrīśailakhaṇḍa*, the Sanskrit text praising Srisailam, which is dated by Reddy to the thirteenth century. The inclusion of Ahobilam's and Mahanandi's glorification into the body of the Srisailam-related textual tradition most likely suggests that pilgrims' routes connecting these three sites were already established (Reddy 2014, 109), and both sites played a significant role in the orb of Srisailam's influence. Nowadays, it is quite common that the pilgrims approach Mahanandi after a visit in Srisailam (Ramesan 2000, 53).

Undoubtedly, however, Srisailam with its Mallikārjuna shrine constitutes the most recognizable site in the set that the AM describes (Srisailam, Mahanandi, Ahobilam, Tirupati). Located towards the north of the Nallamalla Hills, alternatively known as the Sacred Mountain (Śrī Parvata), and already alluded to in the *Mahābhārata*, it features several clusters ranging from regional to pan-Indian level. Srisailam is one of the twelve sites where Śiva manifested himself in the form of *jyotirliṅga*

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(*liṅga* of light),[8] one of the fifty-one *śaktipīṭhas* of Satī, and one of five Vīraśaiva *maṭhas/pīṭhas*. By the mid of the seventh century, the site had become known as a center of Tantric worship, fostering development of various Śaiva traditions associated with extreme practices dedicated to Śiva in his Bhairava form along with his consort. After the Kāpālikas, circa in the eleventh century, the power over the place was seized by the Kālamukhas, and then, by the fourteenth century, by the Vīraśaivas/Liṅgāyatas (Lorenzen 1991, 50–55). By this time, the temple, along with associated sites perceived as its gateways situated towards eight directions, which all together constitute a pilgrimage circuit, was the most important in inland Andhra Pradesh (Talbot 2001, 107). According to Reddy, this concept developed over centuries, with the four outermost gateways, i.e., Tripurantaka (east), Brahmeshvara (west), Umamaheshvara (north) and Siddhavata (south) introduced by the tenth century, and the four minor ones, i.e., Eleshvara (northeast), Sangameshvara (southeast), Pushpagiri (southwest) and Somashila (northeast) added by the thirteenth century.

As far as relations between Ahobilam and Srisailam are concerned, both sites, along with Tripurantaka, constituted the famous centers of worship belonging to the Reḍḍi kingdom (circa 1325–1448 CE). Hence the routes connecting them must have been established earlier (Somasekhara Sarma 1948, 390). The subsequent copper plate grants of the Reḍḍis commemorate the construction of steps to facilitate the pilgrims' ascent to the temples of Srisailam and Upper Ahobilam by the founder of the Reḍḍi kingdom, Prolaya Vema.[9] The king is remembered as supporting temples of various sectarian affiliations despite his personal allegiance to Śaivism (Somasekhara Sarma 1948, 84; Vasantha 2001, 69–70). Tripurantaka, the eastern gateway of Srisailam, was frequented by pilgrims already during the rule of the Kākatīyas (1163–1323) (Talbot 2001, 107). This may point to the existence of the circuits already then. Yet, in the case of Srisailam and Ahobilam, the inscriptional evidence corroborates only Srisailam's presence on the Kākatīyas' pilgrimage agenda, as it records visits of the last Kākatīya king, Pratāparudra (reigned 1289–1323). In regard to Ahobilam, we find a mention of Pratāparudra stopping nearby, remarkably on his way from Srisailam, exclusively in oral legends and *kaifiyats*, i.e., village accounts collected between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries under the supervision of a British official and antiquarian Colin Mackenzie (Wagoner 2003). Although there is no historical data that could prove that Pratāparudra visited Ahobilam, Talbot claims that some details contained in the *kaifiyat* of the village of Mutyalapadu make

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8 On the *jyotirliṅga* sites, see Eck 2012, 189–256.

9 The custom of visiting Srisailam and Ahobilam one after the other, is more often attested by inscriptions starting from Vijayanagara onwards. For instance, one record on two slabs opposite the Bhairaveśvarasvāmi temple at Porumamilla in the Cuddappah district refers to both Srisailam and Ahobilam (1367 AD), and an inscription dating to 1394 AD states that the Vijayanagara king Hari Hara II constructed some *maṇḍapas* at Ahobilam after returning from Srisailam (Ramaswamy Ayyangar 1916, 31–32).

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this plausible (Talbot 2001, 203–204). The *kaifiyats* employ the motif of important Śaiva individuals travelling between Srisailam and Ahobilam quite often: besides Pratāparudra these are Śaṅkara (ca. eighth–ninth century)[10] and the Maratha king Śivājī (1627–1680)[11] (Ramaswamy Ayyangar 1916, 26–28, 46–47). The stories pertaining to Pratāparudra, however, seem the most prolific, as they connect the Kākatīya king either with establishing local temples or the *maṭha*, which, at least in the latter case, appears to antedate the real events. Remarks on the king concern his habit to cast an image of Śiva, which turns into Narasiṃha when he stops in nearby Ahobilam. In addition, the *kaifiyats* which refer to Ahobilam appear to make a certain effort to establish its particular link with Srisailam through the motif, most likely reproduced from local *māhātmyas*, of both sites being mapped on the extreme points within the shared religious landscape. The *Ahobilam Kaifiyat* says:

> (...) to the south of the area of mount Meru and near the southern Varanasi – Srisailam, a part of Karnataka Country – is to be found the Nallamala hill range. On one of these mountains, eight amadas from Srisaila Kshetra, Garuda commenced silent penance to obtain a vision of Lord Narasimha, who destroyed Hiranyakasipa (Sitapati 1982, 4).

The *Srisailam Kaifiyat* states:

> Ahobilam with its famous diamond peak (vajra sringa) is at distance of 10 amadas from Srisailam. Lord Vishnu manifested himself as the Narasimha incarnation emerging out of the Steel Pillar here (Ukkusthamba) and killed the demon Hiranyakasipa, protecting the Parama bhagavatha Uttama Prahlada. This place is known as Ahobila Narasimha Swamy sthala (Sitapati 1981, 5).

Besides narratives which pertain to spatiality and movement between the sites, to the long-lasting tradition of pilgrimage circulation between some centers, including those of various religious allegations, may also point to the festival calendar. As Biardeau observes, especially the date of the annual great festival (*brahmotsava/ mahotsava*), held in many Vaiṣṇava temples in the first half of the month Phalguna (February/March), might be determined by the celebrations of the "Night of Śiva"

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10 Traditional hagiographies of Śaṅkara, the so-called *vijayas* (conquests), depict him as the teacher of world (*jagadguru*) who circumambulates India to restore Vedic values. The Ahobilam tradition locates an event of dismembering a Kāpālika, who at Srisailam approaches Śaṅkara to cut off the master's head, in front of the Malolanarasiṃha temple, which enshrines Narasiṃha in his peaceful aspect (*saumya*) along with his consort, Lakṣmī. The Kāpālika is killed by Śaṅkara's pupil Padmapāda manifesting as Narasiṃha (Biardeau 1975, 54). According to Bader, Śaṅkara's visit to Ahobilam is mentioned only in one account of Śankara's journey, i.e., in Anantānandagiri's *Śaṅkaravijaya*, not composed prior to the fourteenth century (Bader 1991, 19). In its view, Śaṅkara reached Ahobilam from Sringeri and then set off to Tirupati. However, references to his visit in Ahobilam come after an episode which points to a disruption in the journey's course, suddenly interrupted in Srisailam (Bader 1991, 100).

11 Śivāji visited Srisailam in 1674.

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(*śivarātri*),[12] which take place more or less on the turn of February and March. The intention in such cases was most probably to take advantage of the inflow of pilgrims to important Śaiva temples situated nearby. Biardeau perceives this pattern particularly effective in regard to Ahobilam and Srisailam, chiefly due to the physical bearings of the two sites (Biardeau 1975, 49). Their relative proximity (currently a distance of circa 160 kilometers by road; sixty-four kilometers in a direct line, possible to be covered in three days on foot) and location on the same mountain range could have affected the decisions of pilgrims, who because of the fear of encountering tribes, predators or thieves, and the scarcity of walkable tracks, were most likely open to changing their itinerary for security reasons. An additional reason to visit both sites in a row could have been the specific concept of the presiding deities: both, Śiva in his Mallikārjuna form in Srisailam and Viṣṇu in Narasiṃha form in Ahobilam, respectively, are married to a local girl born in the same Chenchu tribe, which, in a way, foregrounded that the two abodes constitute elements of the same natural ecosystem. Moreover, as several scholars have stated, in both cases a male deity of a tribal origin is worshipped as a Purāṇic god inhabiting the shrine situated on the hill: Mailār/Malaṇṇa as Malikārjuna-Śiva in Srisailam and a jungle deity of the feline order as Viṣṇu-Narasiṃha in Ahobilam (e.g., Biardeau 1975, Shulman 1980, Pachner 1985, Sontheimer 1985).

Taking into account the rank and popularity of Srisailam among the devotees hailing from various parts of India, it seems feasible that the exchange of pilgrims between the two sites was of much bigger importance for Ahobilam priests. They had a hard time drawing substantive crowds, not only because of the remoteness, but also because of Ahobilam's relatively late development. According to Biardeau, such a tendency is particularly mirrored in certain narratives which, despite concerning Ahobilam and Srisailam, are known only in Ahobilam. This is for instance the case with an oral story, according to which the two sites are joined by an underground tunnel with entrances in the Ahobilanarasiṃha temple in Upper Ahobilam and in the *maṇḍapa* in front of the Mallikārjuna shrine in Srisailam (Biardeau 1975, 54). Interestingly, a similar concept occurs in AM 9.61–62ab, which speaks about a mountain cave, spreading from Ahobilam to Srisailam, where Narasiṃha resides.[13] The same verses close an account of the deeds of the Bhavanāśinī river (AM 9.1–60), which, quite surprisingly in the context of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, disinclined towards impurity and blood, focuses on the event of taming her fury by Bhairava, alternatively

12 Or the *mahāśivarātri* ("The Great Night of Śiva"): the most important Śaiva festival, which involves a vigil at night. The festival has a rich symbolism, with celebration of overcoming the darkness as a dominant motif.

13 AM 9.61–62ab: *bhairavasyottare bhāge guhā vai parvatābhidhā | aṣṭayojanavistīrṇā śrīśailāntikam āgatā* || 61 || *tatra devaḥ samadhyāste nṛsiṃho gahvarādhipaḥ* | – "In the region to the north of Bhairava ['s deed] there is an eight *yojanas* long cave praised as a mountain, which extends up to Śrīśailam (61). The god Narasiṃha, the lord of the cavern, inhabits it". All translations are mine.

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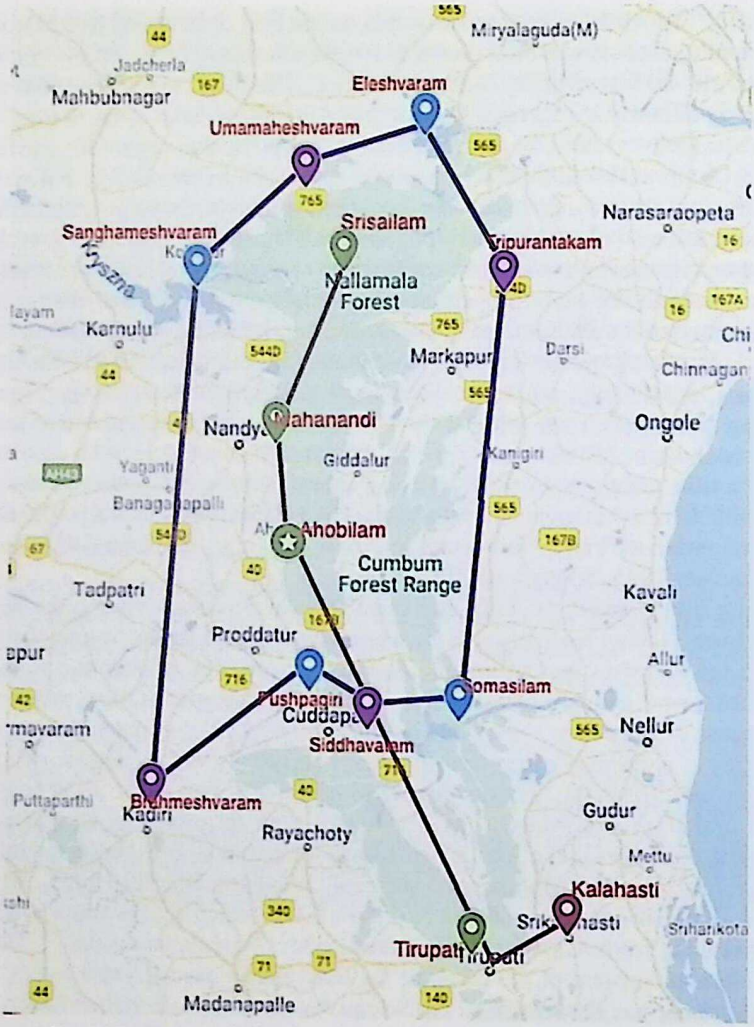

Fig. 2: Space marked by sacred centers along the Nallamalla range and the eight gateways of Srisailam (Google Maps).

called Kapālin. He self-decapitates and throws his head into her current in order to tame the river's rage. This motif, obviously alluding to extreme practices associated with Śaiva Tantric traditions linked in the region of Ahobilam with Srisailam, appears to complement the strategy of establishing connections with the site by means of a bhakti-oriented metaphor of the highest devotion to a deity, in this case articulated through the self-offering of Bhairava to Narasiṃha, whose immanent potency (*śakti*) is Bhavanāśinī (Dębicka-Borek 2019a).

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Conclusions

The instances showcased above show Śaiva places of worship, chiefly Srisailam but also Mahanandi, as symbolically joined with Ahobilam – either due to their shared location along the mountain range or through leading routes between them. This strategy obviously is part of the multi-layered process aimed at creating the site's authority. Through connection to the great and ancient temple of Srisailam, Ahobilam could have aspired to be equally important to Śrīvaiṣṇavas and Śaivas; potential pilgrims were inspired to trace the steps of recognized individuals, and the appearance of Ahobilam on the pilgrimage map of the region was antedated. Does it mean that the occurrence of the less notable Mahanandi on the map sketched by AM 1 results exclusively from practical reasons, that is its location on the way to great Srisailam? I would posit that the answer to this question might be suggested by the way the Srisailam tradition imagined its holy territory. The physical map of the region shows that the circle (*maṇḍala*) formed by the eight shrines surrounding Srisailam naturally incorporates Mahanandi, but also Ahobilam. The bearings of the latter fall between the *maṇḍala's* center, i.e., the Mallikārjuna shrine, and the south-oriented gateways. As mentioned before, both Ahobilam and Mahanandi are glorified in the consecutive chapters of the *Śrīśailakhaṇḍa*, which indicates their role on the pilgrimage map promoted by Srisailam circles already in the thirteenth century, thus a couple of centuries before Ahobilam became an important Vaiṣṇava center. It is noteworthy in this context that a record of Vikramāditya VI of the Western Cālukya dynasty, dated 1124 AD, mentions Ahobilam as Dakṣiṇadvāram (southern gate) to Śrī Parvata (Anuradha 2002, 162). This statement not only implies the possibility of pilgrims' circulation between Ahobilam and Srisailam as early as the twelfth century, but also may indicate attempts to include Ahobilam into the pattern of Srisailam's sacred territory, possibly as an auxiliary point of departure for the pilgrims heading to Srisailam from the south or south-west. The AM's concept of the holy space extending between Ahobilam and Srisailam, and thus incorporating Mahanandi, might allude to the same, already established model of mythological cartography. According to this model, Ahobilam was already implicitly integrated into the space of the greater Srisailam and hence participated in a network which included Mahanandi, too. This hypothesis might explain the brevity of the references in the *Ahobilamāhātmya* to the Vaiṣṇava site of Tirupati: despite having been sung about by the Āḻvārs and praised in hagiographies of Śrīvaiṣṇava teachers, Tirupati actually rose to prominence only in the fourteenth century and developed as an important site of the pilgrimage network quite late, mostly due to the patronage of the Sāḷuva dynasty, local chiefs and merchants, that is roughly at the same time and in similar circumstances as Ahobilam (Dutta 2010, 33). In addition, perhaps the most important connections between Ahobilam and Tirupati-Tirumala are the *jīyars* of the Ahobila *maṭha*, who, if Appadurai is right, moved to Ahobilam from Tirumala in the mid-sixteenth century, most likely in order to avoid tensions concerning the growing influence of Teṉkalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism there (Appadurai 1977, 69–71). To conclude,

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the geographical imaginary of the AM seems to mirror the model of a pilgrimage network propagated in the orb of the Srisailam temple prior to the Vijayanagara empire, when a dominant religion in the region was Śaivism, although, starting with the rule of the Reḍḍi dynasty, the kings extended their patronage to the Vaiṣṇava temples as well (Sambaiah 2014, 388). As Orr observes with reference to medieval Tamil Nadu, for the ordinary devotees and pilgrims who celebrated festivals or retraced pilgrimage tracts, the adherence to one religious fold in this period was hardly significant and rather fluid (Orr 2005, 10–12).

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Appendix: *Ahobilamāhātmya* 1.40–79

AM 1.40–79:

yojanatrayavistīrṇaṃ yojanatrayāyatam |
vīrakṣetram iti khyātaṃ nṛsimhasyābhimānataḥ || 1.40 ||
ucchritaiḥ śṛṅganicayaiḥ caladbhāskaracandramāḥ |
dūrād ālakṣyate śṛṅgair duḥkhasāgarasetubhiḥ ||1.41||
meruvat prakaṭākāraṃ kaścic chṛṅgas tu lakṣyate |
tacchāyācalanaṃ nāsti muktānāṃ padavī yathā || 1.42 ||
hiraṇyakaśipoḥ pūrvam asurāṇāṃ mahīyasaḥ |
gṛhasya stambhabhūto 'yaṃ kālād acalatāṃ gataḥ || 1.43 ||
adyāpi dṛśyate tatra madhyadeśe hariḥ svayaṃ |
jvālā ''kāro nṛsiṃho 'yam ayutārkasamaprabhaḥ || 1.44||
hiraṇyakaśipos tatra vakṣaḥ pīṭhaṃ vyadārayat |
nakhair dambholisaṃkāśair nakiprītikaraiḥ śubhaiḥ ||1.45 ||
tatra devaḥ kṣālitavān karapaṅkeruhadvayam |
raktakuṇḍam iti khyātaṃ madhyadeśe virājitam ||1.46 ||
na vāyunā nātapena katicit kṣīyate jalam |
ye tu tajjalam ālokya nṛsiṃhaṃ saṃsmaranti vai ||1.47 ||
te raktamiśritāṃ yoniṃ na yānti hi kadācana |
asya cograsya devasya śāntyarthaṃ devatāgaṇaḥ || 1.48 ||
gaṅgāṃ tripathagān nīya snāpayāmāsa sādaram |
sā paścimābhimukhataḥ pravahanty atibhīṣaṇā || 1.49 ||
bhavasantāpaharaṇāt tannāmā bhavanāśinī |
ṛṣayo niścayaṃ cakruḥ nirmalāṃ ca prabhāvataḥ || 1.50 ||
asya gāruḍaśailasya śatayojanasammite |
munayo dakṣabhāge tu ye viśeṣā mahīyasaḥ || 1.51 ||
bhūdharasyottare bhāge yojanadvayasammite |
nandyāśramaṃ mahāpuṇyaṃ yatra vai nandikeśvaraḥ || 1.52 ||
śivam uddṛśya bhagavān tapas tepe sudāruṇam |
tataḥ prasanno bhagavān śivas trailokyapūjitaḥ || 1.53 ||
pramathānām adhipatyaṃ datvā tannāma tatsaraḥ |
bhūmiṃ vibhajya harṣeṇa śivaḥ sānnidhyam ātanot || 1.54 ||

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tasya cottarabhāge tu śrīśaila iti viśrutaḥ |
garuḍācalabhāgo 'yaṃ gahano devadānavaiḥ || 1.55 ||
yatra prītiṃ haraś cakre hitvā rajatabhūdharam |
svayambhūs tatra devo 'yaṃ varado 'dyāpi dṛśyate || 1.56 ||
tatra kṛṣṇā pravahati lokakaṇṭakalopinī (corr.; lokakaṇṭhakalopinī) |
sāvadhiḥ parvatasyāsya tataḥ pratyantaparvatāḥ || 1.57 ||
ye ke cātra sthitāḥ puṇyā nadyo bhūdharakandarāḥ |
siddhāśramāḥ surāvāsā yakṣā gandharvakinnarāḥ || 1.58 ||
vaibhavān nārasiṃsya sarve pūjyatamā bhuvi |
ṛṣayaḥ:
kutredaṃ pāvanaṃ kṣetraṃ yatra vai garuḍācalaḥ |
vistīrṇasyāsya śailasya katham ekatra vaibhavaḥ || 1.59 ||
śrīnāradaḥ:
pañcāśatkoṭivistīrṇā dharaṇī harivallabhā |
dvīpaiḥ samudraiḥ sahitā saptabhiśca śiloccayaiḥ || 1.60 ||
tasyāṃ pṛthivyāṃ dvīpeṣu jaṃbūdvīpam anuttamaṃ |
karmabhūmir yato loke sādhakatvān mahattamā || 1.61 ||
tasmin dvīpe mahābhāge khaṇḍe bhāratasaṃjñike (corr.; bharatasaṃjñike) |
meror dakṣiṇabhāge tu kṛṣṇaveṇyāś ca dakṣiṇe || 1.62 ||
saptayojanamātre tu pūrvāmbhodhes tu paścime |
ahobilaṃ tu vikhyātaṃ bhāge vai saptayojane || 1.63 ||
tasminn ahobilakṣetre garuḍādrir iti śrutaḥ |
yathā bhagavato vyaktiḥ paripūrṇasya sarvataḥ || 1.64 ||
ekatra dṛśyate tadvat garuḍācalasaṃjñitaḥ |
evaṃ kṣetrasya nāmedaṃ parvatasyāsya viśrutaṃ || 1.65 ||
nānādrumalatākīrṇaṃ nānāpakṣiniṣevitaṃ |
tarubhiś campakais tālais tamālair hemabhūruhaiḥ || 1.66 ||
[...]
dhanurbāṇadharair mlecchaiḥ strīyuktair ugradarśanaiḥ |
śobhitaḥ sarvajantūnāṃ rakṣaṇopāyadakṣakaḥ || 1.74 ||
munīndraiḥ sevito nityaṃ sadānuṣṭhānatatparaiḥ |
bhūsurair bhāsitālāpaiḥ gurupūjāparāyaṇaiḥ || 1.75 ||
krīḍadbhir apsarobhiś ca sevitaḥ sarvakāmadaḥ |
mahāśailasya māhātmyaṃ vaktuṃ varṣaśatair api || 1.76 ||
na śakyaṃ brahmaṇā vāpi kiṃ punar mādṛśair janaiḥ |
śailasya dakṣiṇe bhāge daśayojanasaṃmite || 1.77 ||
veṅkaṭākhyo mahāśailo yatrāste bhagavān hariḥ |
sevito nityamuktaiś ca ṛṣibhiś ca mahātmabhiḥ || 1.78||

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evam āmalayāc chailo vistṛto garuḍābhidhaḥ |
etad vaḥ sarvam ākhyātaṃ yathā sāntvaṃ subhāṣitam ॥ 1.79 ॥

"[Ahobilam is] three *yojanas* wide and three *yojanas* long. It is called *vīrakṣetra* [= the site of heroes] due to the affection of Narasiṃha['s devotees] (40). The shining moon disturbed by multitude of high peaks is seen from afar along with the peaks [which resemble] bridges over the ocean of misery (41). A certain peak looks like the Meru mountain; however, having a manifested appearance, it casts an immovable shadow, like a path for liberated souls (42). Once a pillar of the house of Hiraṇya-kaśipu, the mightiest among the demons, with time it turned into the rock (43). Even now, in the middle of this area Hari Nṛsiṃha himself is seen in his blazing form with splendor equal to a myriad of suns (44). There he ripped apart Hiraṇyakaśipu's chest with his auspicious nails which resemble Indra's thunderbolts [and] bring heavenly joy (45). There the god washed his lotus hands. In the middle of this area there is a splendid pool called Raktakuṇḍa, (46) the water [of which] perishes neither because of wind, nor because of heat. But those who, having looked at its water, truly recollect Narasiṃha (47), will never enter the womb of mixed blood. In order to pacify this ferocious god, the group of deities (48) respectfully performed ablutions, having brought Gaṅgā, who flows through three worlds. Very terrific, she flows from the western direction (49). Her name is Bhavanāśinī since she removes pains of births (*bhavasantāpa*)—the sages have ascertained that she is sinless due to her power (50). The sages who live on the right side of this great Garuḍaśaila, which is of one hundred *yojanas*, are of the greatest peculiarities (51). Within the distance of two *yojanas* towards north there is the extremely auspicious Nandyāśrama where Nandikeśvara [abides] (52). Having seen Śiva, the venerable one (*bhagavān*) performed a terrible penance [there]; hence the venerable Śiva, worshipped in three worlds, was pleased (53). Having granted the supremacy to his attendants, Śiva shared this land: "this name to this tank" (*tatnāma tatsaraḥ*), [and] with joy extended [his] presence there (54). But towards its north there is also famous Śrīśaila—it is a part of the Garuḍa range which is impenetrable to gods and demons (55). The self-existing (*svayambhū*) god, the benefactor, is seen even now there, for, having abandoned the silver mountain (Kailāsa), [he] the seizer (Hara) fell in love with [this place] (56). The Kṛṣṇā river, which diminishes impediments of the world, flows there, up to this mountain, beyond which adjacent mountains rise (57). Whatever auspicious rivers, mountains, caves, abodes of Siddhas, temples, *yakṣas*, *gandharvas* and *kinnaras* are here (58), they all are the most honorable on earth due to the greatness of Narasiṃha.

Sages: Where is this holy place [of Narasiṃha]? How [it happened that] only in one place within this large mountain, exactly where Garuḍācala is, [such a] power [appeared]? (59).

Honorable Nārada: The earth, beloved by Hari, spreads for five hundred million [*yojanas*], covered with islands, oceans and seven mountains (60). On this earth, the

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best among islands is Jaṃbudvīpa, where the land of religious activities (*karma-bhūmi*) is—the greatest in the world due to [its] suitability for *sādhakas* (*sādhakatva*) (61). But on this highly fortunate island, which is the continent known as Bhārata, on the hemisphere to the south of the Meru mountain and to the south of the Kṛṣṇaveṇī, (62) seven *yojanas* to the west from the eastern ocean, there is famous Ahobilam, which covers the space of seven *yojanas* (63). At this Ahobilakṣetra there is the famous Garuḍādri (Garuḍa mountain), where the venerable one manifested completely everywhere in the same manner (64). In one and the same place it is also known as Garuḍācala: thus, the famous name of this mountain is [the name] of this place (65). This [*kṣetra*] is full of various trees and creepers, [it is] inhabited by various birds, [it is full] of *campaka* trees, palmyra trees, bamboo trees and golden trees (66) [...] This [great mountain] is [inhabited by] ferociously looking *mlecchas* who carry bows and arrows in the company of women, [yet] it is splendid, providing the means of safety to all living beings (74). It is inhabited by the best sages who are constantly engaged in religious practice, by Brahmins of illuminated words, whose goal is to worship gurus (75). It is also inhabited by celestial ladies (*apsaras*) and grants all desires (76ab). Brahmā would not be able to tell the greatness of this great [Garuḍa] range even for hundred years. How, then, [would] people like me? (76cd–77ab). At the distance of ten *yojanas* to the south of the mountain there is a great mountain called Veṅkaṭa, where the venerable Hari resides. It is inhabited by those who are liberated forever and by noble poets (77cd–78). In this manner, the mountain called Garuḍa stretches up to the Malaya mountain. I told you all this gently and eloquently (79)".

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Building Networks: Architecture, Ornament and Place in Early Modern South India[1]

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In a wall painting within one of the upper interior levels of the outermost temple tower (*gopuram*) of the Nāṟumpūnātha (Śiva) temple at Tiruppudaimarudur in the far south of India, two pilgrims are depicted approaching a Śiva shrine surrounded by trees, a priest holding a water-pot greeting them at the threshold (figure 1). But this is not simply a generic Śiva temple, but the shrine dedicated to Śiva as Sundareśvara (Cokkanātha) in Madurai as the distinctive standing elephants emerging from the temple walls make clear to the viewer, familiar with the iconography of the deities and sacred landscape of Tamil South India. Several other important Śiva temples are also depicted in the wall paintings within the *gopuram* at Tiruppudaimarudur, emphasising the role of ornament in evoking the charisma of distant pilgrimage sites and the devotional networks that connect the sacred landscape of the Tamil region. This chapter seeks to examine a range of architectural and design perspectives on the historical construction of temple networks in early modern (fifteenth–eighteenth century) Tamil South India, from mural paintings and relief sculpture, through to the construction of shrine "replicas" and the material traces of festival processions.

Site Replication and Architectural Iconography

Reference to iconography in South Asian art normally invites consideration of the signs and symbols—the postures, hand gestures and attributes—that identify Buddhist, Jain, Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva images. But a consideration of the iconography and meanings of architecture may also offer insights into the construction and maintenance of temple networks in early modern South India. Through his study of religious architecture in medieval Europe, the much-cited Richard Krautheimer (1942)

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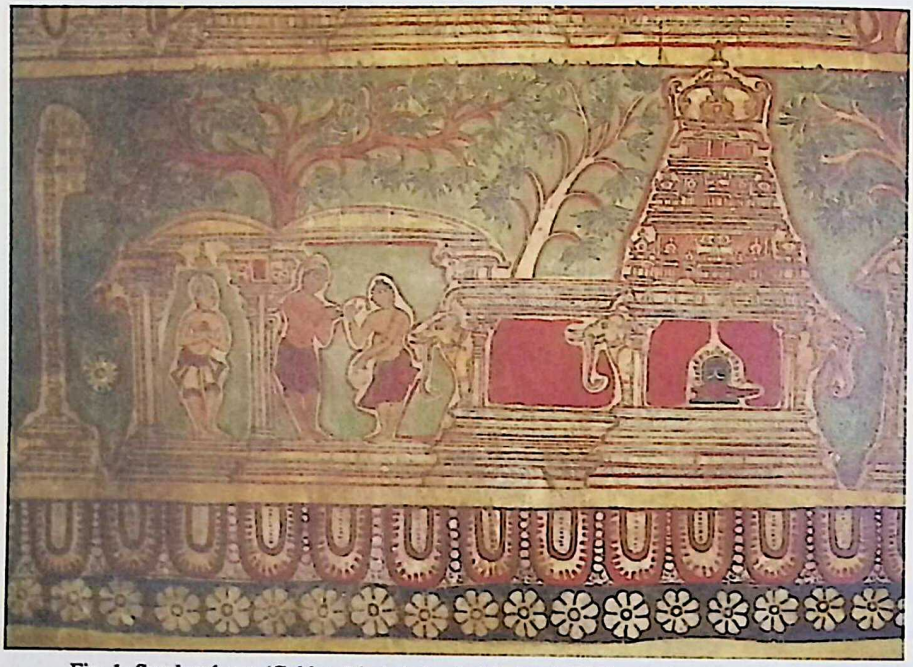

Fig. 1: Sundareśvara (Cokkanātha) shrine in Madurai. Wall painting in *gopuram* of Nāṟumpūnātha (Śiva) temple at Tiruppudaimarudur, seventeenth century (photo by the author).

established the importance of the "content" or iconography of architecture. As Paul Crossley has noted, Krautheimer observed that certain ancient, venerable structures, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, were frequently copied in early medieval architecture, not accurately in order to produce an exact reproduction, but approximately with enough of the essential features of the prototype—the number of piers or the inclusion of an ambulatory—to evoke its meaning and enabling the viewer to experience, at a distance, the essential qualities of the original. "The associative power of architectural forms could thus be used by patrons to promote devotion, evoke holy sites, or [...] make political propaganda" (Crossley 1988, 116).

Krautheimer's article was published in the 1940s, contemporary with Stella Kramrisch's exploration of the meaning and symbolism of temples rather than their form alone (1946). "To Kramrisch, the need was to place the temple within a tradition that could give back to the temple its significance, then to show how that significance was given form." (Meister 1980, 181). Historic temples were understood to be microcosms, models of the cosmos and to visually embody the process of cosmic creation; such an interpretation has been hugely influential since. In this understanding of sacred space, temples and cities recreate cosmic structure in the importance of the sacred centre with layers of ordered peripheral space around. The

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challenge has been to relate such an overarching Sanskritic text-based interpretation to the historically situated devotional experience of pilgrims in specific temples, such as those built in South India from the seventh century to the present. Phyllis Granoff (1997) has questioned the validity of this cosmological model of the Hindu temple, proposing an alternative, complementary model drawing upon later *purāṇas* and contemporary inscriptions that in their descriptions of the abodes of deities suggest a more concrete and less abstract notion of the temple and all the gods and goddesses present. Temples are understood as the city and palace of the god, as heaven on earth. While she notes that the descriptions of heavens vary, just like temples, there are a number of recurrent features: "[...] heaven is always a vast metropolis, with numerous concentric areas all crammed with buildings and peopled by gods and other creatures who have come to serve the main deity. The city is watered by a river, more often by two rivers. The descriptions all proceed from the outermost precincts of this city inward. The city is surrounded by a series of walls with gateways that are carefully guarded" (Granoff 1997, 177). Such Puranic descriptions of heaven could equally describe a South Indian temple with a series of concentric enclosure (*prākāra*) walls, multiple shrines and attendant deities around the main god at the centre. In Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding some temples are considered to be Viṣṇu's heaven Vaikuṇṭha on earth (*bhūloka vaikuṇṭha*). The vast Ranganātha temple at Srirangam, surrounded by rivers, is evocative of the mythical portrayal of Vaikuṇṭha circled by the Virajā river that forms a clear boundary separating earth from heaven. This understanding of Srirangam as *Bhūloka Vaikuṇṭha* is evident from literature, such as the fourteenth century *Guruparamparā prabhāvam*, and indeed in festival ritual. During the annual festival recitation of the entire Śrīvaiṣṇava canon (*adhyayanotsavam*), that has been celebrated from the eleventh century in Srirangam, the understanding of the temple as "heaven on earth" becomes more explicit. Indeed, every temple in which this festival is celebrated is considered to be at least temporarily *Bhūloka Vaikuṇṭha* (Narayanan 1994, 115–116, Venkatesan 2019).[2] Madurai is similarly famed as "the world of Śiva on earth", a title also attributed to other Śaiva shrines (Shulman 1980, 21).

Temples may serve to replicate an otherworldly structure, whether the cosmos or an image of heaven, but many more were understood to be part of the imagined, mythic and sacred landscape traversed by pilgrims. As Diana Eck has emphasised, India has no single pre-eminent sacred site, instead imagining the linking and multiplication of places to constitute the entire world. "Those things that are deeply important are to be widely repeated. The repetition of places, the creation of clusters and circles of sacred places, the articulation of groups of four, five, seven, or twelve sites – all this constitutes a vivid symbolic landscape characterized not by exclusivity and uniqueness, but by polycentricity, pluralism, and duplication" (Eck 2012, 5). In

2 The earliest inscription describing the major Śrīvaiṣṇava temple at Melukote as *Bhūloka Vaikuṇṭha* dates to 1582 (Vasantha 1991, 2).

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the Tamil region, networks of pilgrimage sites linked the south with shrines all over India – Kanchipuram as one of the seven *mokṣadāyaka*, the cities that ensure liberation (*mokṣa*); Rameshvaram is the site of one of the twelve *jyotirliṅgas* (*liṅgas* of light), for example. But other networks of sites wholly within the South created an imagined Tamil landscape—"the good world where Tamil is spoken [from] northern Venkatam to Kumari in the south" in the *Tolkāppiyam*—that from the eighth-ninth centuries became a built landscape of stone temples.[3]

Building the Tamil Landscape

Sacred sites and the temples built upon them in the Tamil region were increasingly seen as part of such an imagined landscape. Temples might replicate or evoke a connection with another sacred site by name or by dedication alone. Some sites in southern India are identified as a "southern Kashi", Śiva's sacred city of Benares or Varanasi on the river Ganges in North India. Kumbakonam on the banks of the Kaveri river is sometimes understood to be a "southern Kashi", for example, an association evident from around the seventeenth century; Kanchipuram has also been interpreted in a similar manner. Up until the eleventh century the most important temple in Varanasi was the Avimukteśvara, but devotional pre-eminence shifted from the twelfth century and later to the temple dedicated to Śiva as Kāśī Viśvanātha (or Viśveśvara) (Bakker 1996; Eck 1983, 129–136; Desai 2017, 17–29). Kumbakonam's connection with Varanasi is evident from the Kāśī Viśvanātha temple built in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries alongside the Makāmakam tank. But a more longstanding connection with Kashi is evident from the Makāmakam festival held every twelve years in this tank that was renovated and the present series of sixteen pavilions (*maṇḍapas*) built around its irregular perimeter in the early seventeenth century under Tanjavur Nāyaka patronage. For it is here in Kumbakonam that the seven river goddesses of India, including the Ganga, coalesce in order to cleanse themselves of the accumulated sins washed off by bathing pilgrims. The southern replication of Śiva's sacred city on the Ganges and its most important Viśvanātha temple is more explicit in the construction of the fifteenth-century Kāśī Viśvanātha temple in Tenkasi by the Pāṇḍya king Arikēsari Parākrama (reigned 1422–1463) (Sethuraman 1985; Branfoot 2007, 19–21). Before setting out on pilgrimage to northern India, he dreamt that Śiva of Kashi had asked the king to build the god a new home for, ever since the *Turuṣkas* had come to his city, Śiva had been homeless. Destroyed in 1194 by Quṭb al-Dīn Aibak, a reconstructed Viśvanātha temple in Kashi was again demolished in the late fourteenth or fifteenth century. The new Tamil temple was built for this deity, hence the town's name: "southern" (*ten*) Kashi.

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3 This definition of the Tamil land in the Sangam-era *Tolkāppiyam* (early centuries CE) is repeated in many later texts. On Tamil cultural geography see Peterson and Selby 2007, 4–6 and Stein 1977.

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Though there is little architecturally or topographically that replicates the prototype, the evocation of the sacred charisma of the Viśvanātha temple in far-away Benares is evident in name alone. Viśvanātha shrines have been built within the enclosures of other temples from the fifteenth century and later, such as that within the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple in Madurai's 1000-column *maṇḍapa* built in the 1560s. In Kanchipuram, there are two Kāśī Viśvanātha/Viśveśvara temples, one in the outermost *prākāra* of the Kāmākṣī Amman temple, and another on the west bank of the Sarvatīrtha tank just to the west of the Ekāmbareśvara temple.

The Tamil region has a strong sense of the divine power of place: medieval inscriptions often refer to a deity as the "Lord of such-and-such a place" rather than indicate whether it is Śiva or Viṣṇu (or a Tīrthaṅkara or Buddha) (Orr 2005, 29). The wandering Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava poet-saints of the sixth to ninth centuries similarly sang in praise of the deities of the Tamil landscape, "a fundamentally locative worldview in which villages, fords, seacoasts, rivers, and hills are identified with the particular deity." (Eck 2012, 81). As temples began to be built in brick and later stone, so they came to be connected through the movement of pilgrims into larger networks. The Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition recognises a network of 108 sacred sites, the Divya Deśas (divine abodes) that were sung into sacrality by the twelve *āḻvār* poets between the sixth and ninth centuries. Of the 108 sites, two are other-worldly—the supreme heaven (Vaikuṇṭha) and the cosmic Ocean of Milk (Tiruppāṟkaṭal)—but the remaining 106 are terrestrial and the majority are in the Tamil country. While these sites were clearly important to the *āḻvārs*, it was not until the late twelfth century, a particularly dynamic period in the history of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, that the Divine Abodes came to be systemised as a pilgrimage network through hagiography and poetry. The four most important are considered to be those to which the most *āḻvārs* sang and to which the most poems were addressed: in order, Srirangam, Venkatam (Tirupati/Tirumalai), Kanchipuram and Tirumaliruncholai (Alagarkoyil). As *ācāryas* began to narrate the wonders of these sacred places and the unique character of each deity of place in order to forge the geography of an emerging Śrīvaiṣṇava community, so from the fourteenth century on did patrons expand and embellish the architecture of the temples at these sites (Dutta 2010; Young 2014). Detailed architectural histories of some of the major Vaiṣṇava temples suggest that, though founded earlier between the tenth to twelfth centuries, the main period for their expansion into the temple-cities frequented today was the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

A further pattern is the reproduction of the charisma of particular Divya Deśas by building shrines to the most important forms of Viṣṇu further afield. Of the four most celebrated sites—Srirangam, Venkatam (Tirumalai), Kanchipuram and Tirumaliruncholai (Alagarkoyil)—it is the construction of temples dedicated to Veṅkaṭeśvara, far away from the prototype at Tirumalai, that are the most widespread. Veṅkaṭeśvara at Tirupati is among the most important Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage sites, and though established by the tenth century, the temple gained the pre-eminence it maintains to this day only from the late fifteenth century. In the early

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sixteenth century under the patronage of the Vijayanagara emperors of the Tuḷuva dynasty Kṛṣṇadeva and Acyutadeva, both great devotees of Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Veṅkaṭeśvara became a South Indian rather than more narrowly Tamil deity as further devotees from the Kannada- and Telugu-speaking parts of the Deccan travelled to the temple. The Śrīvaiṣṇava turn and the increasing popularity of Tamil forms of Viṣṇu, such as Veṅkaṭeśvara, across South India is evident from the eight temples dedicated to the deity—known there as Tiruveṅgaḷanātha—built from the mid-fifteenth century on at the Vijayanagara imperial capital. Raṅganātha of Srirangam and Varadarāja of Kanchipuram were also important Śrīvaiṣṇava forms of Viṣṇu, whose presence at the capital is evident from material remains (relief sculpture and fewer, more modest temples), though neither were as important as Veṅkaṭeśvara. New temples to Veṅkaṭeśvara were also built in the far south in the sixteenth century, such as that built by the Madurai Nāyaka Kṛṣṇappa in the 1560s at Krishnapuram east of Tirunelveli (Branfoot 2008). A wider survey of the historical development and dates of dedication of Veṅkaṭeśvara temples might suggest the chronology and geography of the dissemination of the deity across southern India.

In addition to the Divya Deśas, other smaller networks of temples are identified by Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Though not as widespread as temples dedicated to Veṅkaṭeśvara, a network of five temples dedicated to Raṅganātha, the *pañcaraṅgakṣetras*, follow the course of the Kaveri down river from Srirangapatnam near Mysore, to Srirangam, then the Appakkūṭattāṉ Perumāḷ temple at Koviladi, the Parimaḷa Raṅganātha temple at Tiruindalur near Mayiladuturai, and the Raṅganātha Perumāḷ in Vadarengam.[4] Neither the Varadarāja at Kanchipuram nor the Aḻakar temple at Alagarkoyil are replicated to the same degree as the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple upon Venkatam hill above Tirupati.[5] One explanation for a limited number of subsidiary shrines to site-specific deities in another far-off temple may be explained by the historic circumstances following the disruption in the Tamil region from the late thirteenth century. A series of incursions into the Tamil country by the Hoysaḷas of southern Karnataka and others were followed by raids by the Khaljī and Tughluq sultanate from Delhi in 1310–1311, 1318, and 1323. Within a brief period of time, many of the old polities of southern India disappeared. In this disruptive period, hiding or removing images elsewhere to safer temples became an important means of preservation (Davis 1997, 127–142). Such flights from perceived danger inspired literature of exile and return, enhancing the status of the mobile deity and that of its protectors through miraculous stories of adventure, heroism and sacrifice (Davis 1997, 129). Shrines may then have been constructed for the mobile deity fleeing to a distant temple, material legacies of past migration at times of threat. At Tirumala, for example, shrines were built in the

4 The Śārṅgapāṇi temple in Kumbakonam, also dedicated to Viṣṇu in his reclining form, is sometimes considered one of the Pañcaraṅga Kṣetras in place of Vadarengam, especially as this temple has fallen into disrepair as a result of the changing course of the river. The antiquity of this group remains uncertain at present.

5 On some "replicas" of Alagarkoyil, see Orr 2018.

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early fourteenth century for Varadarāja, Raṅganātha and Narasiṃha within the first two *prākāras* when the Veṅkaṭeśvara temple "served as a sort of refugee camp for Vaishnavite idols of antiquity" (Viraraghavacharya 1977, vol. 1, 65). Raṅganātha did indeed reside at Tirumala for several decades before being restored to his home in Srirangam in the 1370s by the victorious Vijayanagara armies, as inscriptions at the latter temple record (Davis 1997, 131).[6]

Other Śrīvaiṣṇava temple networks within the larger group of Divya Deśas may relate to the hagiography of individual *āḻvārs*. One such group is the network of nine Vaiṣṇava temples—the Navatirupati—situated on both banks of the river Tamraparani in the far south of the Tamil region. These are all connected to Nammāḻvār, from his birthplace at Alvar Tirunagari and the eight other sites nearby to which he sang in praise. Today pilgrims begin their journey at either Srivaikuntam on the northern bank or at Alvar Tirunagari located on the southern bank, almost directly opposite, travelling via the other seven less distinguished temples. Furthermore, contemporary festival performance connects them all: deities from all temples congregate at Alvar Tirunagari in Vaikāci (May-June) during the Garuḍasēvai festival. But the construction of the temples was not uniform: Alvar Tirunagari and Srivaikuntam are of individual distinction and the earliest evidence for their construction is in the thirteenth century, and there is no clear uniformity of design or layout among all Navatirupati temples. Yet by the sixteenth–seventeenth century, perhaps under the patronage of the Tenkasi Pāṇḍyas and Madurai Nāyakas, these nine closely related temples came to be considered a connected pilgrimage network. The Vijayanagara emperor Kṛṣṇadevarāya (reigned 1509-1530) is reported to have visited the Navatirupatis on his imperial pilgrimage through the far south, according to the Telugu *Rāyavācakamu* ("Tidings of the King"), an account of his reign composed at the Madurai Nāyaka court ca. 1600 (Wagoner 1993, 158).[7] Further evidence for the network's identification and wider recognition comes from a mural dated to the 1830s in the *citramaṇḍapa* (painted hall) of the Veṅkaṭaramaṇasvāmi temple just north of the Jaganmohan Palace in Mysore. The murals depict many of the sacred sites that the Madhva brahmin Subbarāyadāsa visited during an immense pilgrimage sponsored by Mysore's Kṛṣṇarāja Woḍeyar III (reigned 1799–1868) not only to the most important sacred sites in the Mysore kingdom, but also to those in greater South India and some in North India. As Simmons argues, the paintings display Mysore as the centre of pan-Indian sacred devotion with local, regional and pan-Indian sacred geography reconfigured as sovereign territory under the watchful gaze of the ideal king-devotee and his lineage (Simmons 2020, 212–226). Among the paintings of sites that he visited are several Divya Deśas, including Melukote, Kanchipuram, Kumbakonam and the group of nine temples of the Navatirupati, identified as such in a Kannada label.

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6 Varadarāja did not flee his temple at times of danger in the fourteenth century but he did in the 1680s (Hüsken 2017).

7 I am grateful to Archana Venkatesan for drawing my attention to this.

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Tamil Śaivas also developed a network of sacred sites though, in comparison with the systemization of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas' 108 pilgrimage sites by the twelfth century, the generation of a comprehensive list of 276 Śaiva sacred sites was relatively recent and the identification of a *Tēvāram* place may be contested or debated, or may even shift (Orr 2014).[8] These are the "places that have received a hymn" (*pāṭal peṟṟa talaṅkal*), the sites that were celebrated by Appar, Cuntarar and Campantar and compiled together in the *Tēvāram*. Cēkkiḻār's twelfth century *Periyapurāṇam* draws upon the *Tēvāram* telling the stories of the poet-saints as narratives of journeys to shrines sacred to Śiva in which the poems are represented as spontaneous outpourings of praise and devotion to the particular manifestation of Śiva at that site. Around seventy percent of the 276 sacred places are in Cholanadu, the central region of Tamilnadu that includes the Kaveri delta (Spencer 1970; Peterson 1982). It may have been the printing and circulation from the 1860s of the *Tēvāram* and *Periyapurāṇam* that enhanced the Tamil Śaiva sense of community embedded in the network of temples that collectively created a Śaiva sacred landscape even if not an actual programme of pilgrimage. Prior to this, smaller networks of Śaiva temples were considered of greater regional significance, some of which were constituted around the legendary lives of individual poet-saints rather than their hymns.

Among the many Śaiva pilgrimage sites in Tamilnadu, Rameshvaram is of pan-Indian significance not only because it is the southernmost of the four *dhāms* ("holy abodes") and one of the twelve *liṅgas* of light (*jyotirliṅgas*) that map Śiva's presence across the country, but also for its prominence in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Another important group of Śiva temples is located within the Tamil country, the five "elemental" temples (*pañcabhūtasthala*) dedicated to the *liṅgas* of air, earth, fire, water and ether (*ākāśa*), a network that can be traced as early as the tenth-century *Sūta Saṃhitā* (Smith 1996, 14). These are located respectively at the Kāḷahastīśvara at Srikalahasti, the Ēkambareśvara in Kanchipuram, the Aruṇācaleśvara at Tiruvannamalai, the Jambukeśvara at Tiruvannaikka on Srirangam island and the Naṭarāja at Chidambaram. Without elaborating detailed building histories for each, all these temples can be traced to the seventh to ninth centuries, were substantially expanded to reach their present scale in the twelfth to sixteenth centuries and were all substantially renovated around 1900. Chidambaram is also included among a further group of five temples where Śiva performed his cosmic dance (*pañcanṛtyasabhā*); the others are Tiruvalangadu, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kuttralam. Such networks of five deities and temples has its counterpart in the *pañcakṛtya*, the five cosmic functions of Śiva, his five faces and the five syllable Śaiva *mantra* (*pañcākṣara*) (Eck 2012, 253). Networks of four temples also mark territory with the suggestion of directionality to north, south, east and west and – with the addition of a fifth to suggest the centre – of completeness. The network of six sites sacred to Murukaṉ, the Tamil deity *par*

8 The number also varies, two additional sites having been added to the earlier list of 274 following the discovery of an additional poem by Campantar inscribed on a temple wall and an additional poem by Cuntarar in a manuscript.

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excellence, that define the extent of his domain take this concept further, the four cardinal directions together with the zenith and the nadir representing the three-dimensional cosmos in its totality (Eck 2012, 33; Clothey 1978, 116–131).[9]

Another pattern, more often associated with Śaiva temples than Vaiṣṇava, is the replication of site-specific shrines clustered around the temple's main deity at the site. Establishing a clear periodisation for this practice is difficult given that few small sub-shrines have dated inscriptions, but stylistic evidence suggests this development is contemporary with the growth of site-specific mythic literature (*talapurāṇam*, Sanskrit *sthalapurāṇa*) in Tamil in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries. At some temples, only a single shrine to a site-specific form of Śiva may be included. At Tenkasi, for example, a small shrine to Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara of Madurai was built in the late 1550s[10] on the north side of the second *prākāra* alongside the main shrine to Kāśī Viśvanātha and in an adjacent shrine his consort Lokanāyakī (or Ulaku) Amman̲. This modest shrine—and others like it elsewhere—was constructed precisely when the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple in Madurai was beginning a long period of renovation and expansion under the Nāyaka rulers of the city, and when the myths in Madurai's best-known site-history, the *Tiruviḷaiyātāl Purāṇam*, were circulating more widely.[11] Parker has suggested that this location both spatially and ideologically subordinated Mīnākṣī of Madurai to the "Mother of the World" (Ulakamman̲); the iconography of both goddesses is similar, standing and holding a green parrot (Parker 2007, 163).[12] At other sites there may be multiple such site-specific deities installed in subsidiary shrines.

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9 Temples were built at the five undisputed Murukan̲ sites by the ninth-tenth centuries; the sixth is every other Murukan̲ temple, emphasising his pervasive presence in the Tamil region. During the Tamil Neośaiva revival from the late nineteenth century, the Murukan̲ temples at Palani, Tiruchendur, Tiruttani and Swamimalai were all extensively renovated and expanded.

10 An inscription on the Kāśī Viśvanātha temple's *mahāmaṇḍapa* mentions the shrine's construction in 1558/1559 (*Annual Report on Epigraphy* [hereafter *ARE*], Madras: Government Press no. 530 of 1917); another inscription on the shrine itself is dated 1560/1 (*ARE* no. 579 of 1917).

11 Branfoot 2007, 27–30 and Fisher 2017, 143–149. An earlier instance of the migration of Sundareśvara of Madurai is evident from an inscription dated 1258 at Chidambaram recording the gift of land for offerings to the image of Tiruvālavāyuṭaiyār Al̲akiya Cokkanar for the welfare of the Pāṇḍya king (*ARE* no. 153 of 1961–1962). I am grateful to Leslie Orr for bringing this to my attention.

12 For the mythic connections made between Mīnākṣī of Madurai and Āṇṭāḷ of Srivilliputtur, another goddess identified by the parrot in her hand, see Venkatesan and Branfoot 2015, 34–36.

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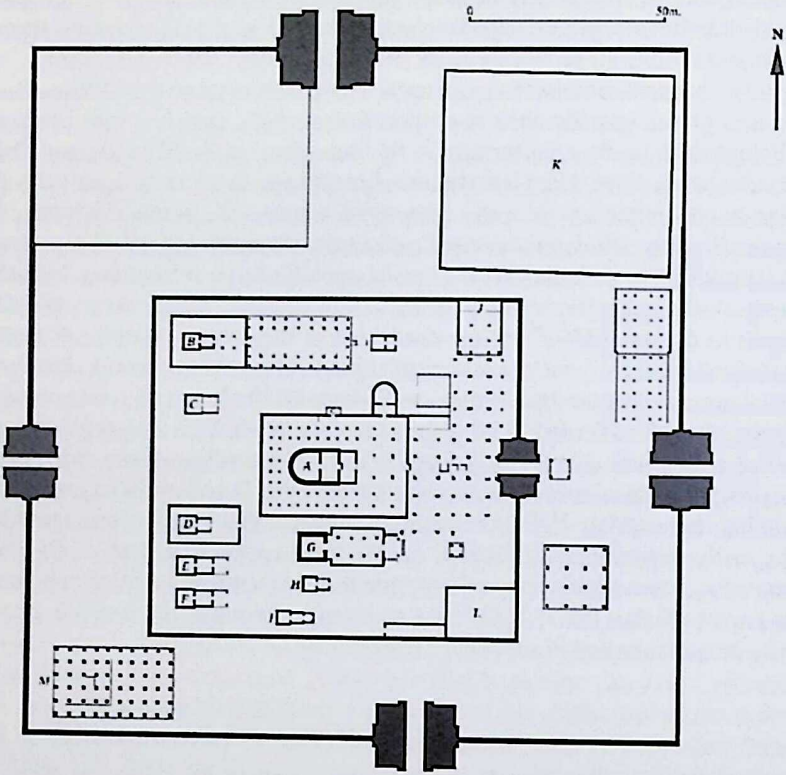

Fig. 2: Ground plan of the Bhaktavatsala (Śiva) temple, Tirukkalukkundram (plan by the author).

Just below the summit of Vedagiri, the hill at Tirukkalukundram between Kanchipuram and Mamallapuram, is one of the earliest Pallava cave-temples known. The hill is also known as Pakṣitīrtham ("place of the birds"), for two eagles sent from north and south come to feed here each day. The much larger Bhaktavatsala (Śiva) temple at the foot of the hill with huge *gopurams* on the four sides of three large *prākāras* largely dates to the sixteenth century, although there are fragmentary remains of shrines dating to the seventh-eighth and on into the twelfth centuries (figure 2). The apsidal main shrine to Bhaktavatsala stands within the dark, enclosed innermost enclosure, but a much wider range of Śaiva deities are installed in ten additional shrines in the open second *prākāra*. The most substantial is the shrine for Bhaktavatsala's consort Tripurasundarī (*B*) and, as is common practice, there are additional shrines for Śiva's children—Vaṇṭuvaṉa Piḷḷaiyār (Vināyakar, Gaṇeśa) (*F*) and Āṟumukam ("six-faced", Skanda) (*D*)—and another in the standard northeast

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corner facing south for Naṭarāja (*J*). A comparatively large shrine directly south of the main Śiva shrine in the first *prākāra* contains Somāskanda (*G*), the *utsavamurti* of Vēdagirīśvara, the "Lord of Vedagiri" rather than Bhaktavatsala, for the two nearby temples are ritually connected. But in addition to these shrines, further site-specific forms of Śiva are present: Ekāmbareśvara (*H*), Aruṇācaleśvara (*C*), Jambukeśvara (*E*) and, in place of another of the "elemental" *liṅgas*, the anticipated Kāḷahastīśvara, there is a shrine to Ātmanātha (*I*), Śiva at Avudaiyarkoyil (figure 3). Māṇikkavācakar received initiation from Śiva here and appropriately enough there is a shrine to the Śaiva poet-saint facing Ātmanātha west of the kitchen; an inscription on its south wall may suggest its presence by 1135.[13] None of the other subsidiary shrines have inscriptions to offer reliable clues as to their construction, nor were they built in the same period, but their gradual construction took place between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. The spatial distribution of shrines within the temple at Tirukkalukundram does not replicate any geographical logic—Ekāmbareśvara of Kanchipuram is not the most northerly, for example—though at other temples, such as the Kuṟṟālanātha temple at Kuttralam such a concept does seem to have been practiced.

Fig. 3: Subsidiary shrines, Bhaktavatsala (Śiva) temple, Tirukkalukkundram (photo by Emma Natalya Stein).

13 Gopalakrishnan 2005, 86 citing *ARE* no. 186 of 1932–1933.

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Kuttralam at the foot of the Western Ghats near Tenkasi is the site of the *Citrasabhā*, one of the five places where Śiva danced. In the western *prākāra* at the Kurrālanātha temple at the site, a row of six shrines house selected gods and goddesses not of the whole Tamil region but more narrowly of Pandyanadu in the far south. The northernmost of the shrines are the two adjacent ones that house Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣī of Madurai. Attached to these is the shrine for Pālvaṇṇanātha of Karivalamvandanallur together with his consort, then next is Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa of Sankaranayinarkoyil, and finally in this line of attached shrines is Nārumpūnātha of Tiruppudaimarudur. Further to the south are two stand-alone shrines for Nellaiyappar and his consort, of Tirunelveli, and for the god and goddess of Papanasam (in the hills to the west of Tirunelveli). According to Leslie Orr, the inscriptions at Kuttralam do not indicate when these deities arrived here, or who was responsible for installing them, or what was the logic of their inclusion and arrangement (Orr 2015). The architectural design offers few clues to the date either, given their unelaborated appearance, though probably no earlier than the fifteenth century and perhaps even as late as the nineteenth. Of note here at Kuttralam is the spatial arrangement of the shrines: the distribution of the six shrines from north to south corresponds with their geographic distribution. Furthermore, in seeking to explain why these various forms of Śiva were chosen to be installed alongside Kurrālanātha, it is worth noting that the Tamil-wide distribution of five "elemental" Śivas mentioned above has its own replication within Pandyanadu: Pālvaṇṇanātha of Karivalamvandanallur is a local version of the fire-*liṅga* at Tiruvannamalai, and Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa of Sankaranayinarkoyil an earth-*liṅga*, as at Kanchipuram.[14] The examination of these subsidiary shrines within the growing temple complexes of the Tamil region after the twelfth century thus demonstrates the need to consider not only which deities are replicated and when their shrines were built, but also their spatial arrangement in relation to each other and the temple's "centre."

Ornament, Temple Networks and Temple Design

Temples and shrines may also be replicated in architectural ornament – in relief sculpture and later in wall and ceiling paintings – visualising connections in the language of design between temples in the immediate neighbourhood or much farther afield. Representations of sacred sites or temples may be reduced to the distinctive iconography of the main deity. *Liṅgas* can be hard to distinguish, so the related goddess, site-tree (*sthalavṛkṣa*) and water-source, or another site-specific feature may indicate the precise deity and thus location if inscriptions or labels are absent (Seastrand 2013, 79). The *sthalavṛkṣa* of many temples is often a distinct tree

14 The remaining "elemental" *liṅgas* of Pandyanadu are located within fifteen miles north and west of Sankaranayinarkoyil including the northernmost Naccāṭai Tavirttaruḷiyanātha temple at Devadanam (ether) on the Rajapalaiyam to Sivagiri road, and the Madhyasthanātha temple at Darugapuram (water) and Tripuranātha temple at Tenmalai (air) between.

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Fig. 4: Relief sculpture of shrine, Citra *gopuram*. Nampirāyar Perumāḷ temple, Tirukkurunkudi, seventeenth century (photo by the author).

species and an explanation may be mentioned in the temple's site-history (*sthalapurāṇa*). Artists were clearly conscious of such distinctions and thus the type of tree can be a visual shorthand for Tamil sacred geography: bamboo for Nellaiyappar in Tirunelveli, for example, or three mango trees for Vāṉamāmalai Perumāḷ at Nanguneri. The paintings within the Tiruppudaimarudur *gopuram* mentioned at the outset include nine distant sites with no immediate or obvious connection to the temple. The Citra *gopuram* of the Nampirāyar Perumāḷ temple at Tirukkurunkudi is notable for the many unusually large and detailed sculpted reliefs on the wall surfaces and within the horseshoe-arches (*nāsi*, *kuḍu*) of the curved *kapota* (cornice) at the top of the stone base. Some of the scenes of small *vimānas* (*Drāviḍa* shrine) in the *kuḍus* initially seem to be generic images of small temples. However, upon closer inspection, the peacock or mouse making offerings to the Śiva-*liṅga* together with the different site-tree (*sthalavṛkṣa*) above the *nandimaṇḍapa* suggest that a specific shrine is depicted that was connected with the Nampirāyar Perumāḷ temple at the time of the *gopuram*'s construction in the seventeenth century (figure 4). Explanations for why specific deities or shrines are represented on a different temple in small-scale reliefs or paintings, often at a considerable distance away, is a largely untapped mode of enquiry, that requires closer analysis of the relevant site-myths, festival practice and networks of patronage.

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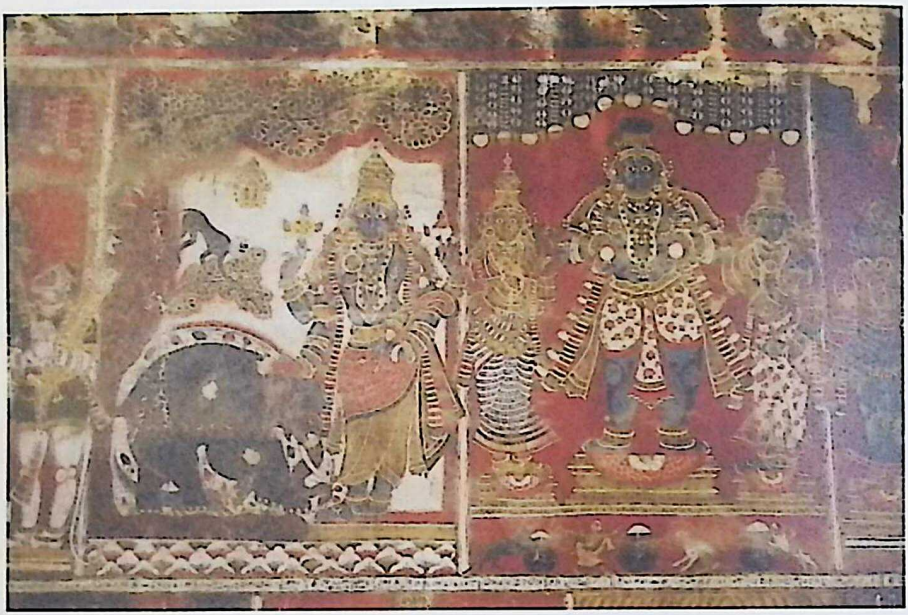

Fig. 5: Wall paintings of the 108 Divya Deśas. Kallapirāṉ (Perumāḷ) temple, Srivaikuntam, eighteenth century (photo by the author).

Sculptures of individual or small numbers of related sites seem to be the norm in the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries. It is only from the later seventeenth, or more likely eighteenth, century that much larger networks of temples start to be depicted, especially in wall and ceiling paintings. Although the systemization of the 108 Divya Deśas had occurred by the thirteenth century in Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, among the earliest extant visualisations of the complete series of standing, seated and reclining images of Viṣṇu at each sacred site is painted on the walls within the dark first *prākāra* corridor surrounding the Kallapirāṉ temple at Srivaikuntam, probably dating to the later eighteenth century (Seastrand 2019) (figure 5). As mentioned above, the comparable systemization of the Śaiva sacred sites did not take place until much later, perhaps not until the increasing circulation of printed texts in the nineteenth century.

However, perhaps the earliest clear evidence for the conception of a network of Śaiva sacred sites is their depiction in ceiling paintings at the Ātmanātha temple at Avudaiyarkoyil (Seastrand 2013, 164–167, 214–224). The *maṇḍapa* in which the paintings are shown was completed by 1739 thus establishing the earliest date for the paintings. Four larger panels of Kanchipuram, Mount Kailasa, Madurai (labelled Vaigai after the river) (figure 6) and Chidambaram have the remaining sites depicted on a smaller scale and arranged geographically following the *talamuṟai* order of the *Tēvāram*: east to west along the north bank of the river Kaveri, then west to east,

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then south before the northern sites.[15] As Seastrand has convincingly demonstrated, the order relates both to their geography in the *Tēvāram* and to the movement of the pilgrim-viewer looking up. Each site is indicated by a Śiva and goddess shrine, a water tank and sometimes the *sthalavṛkṣa*, though not all can readily be identified individually. As is increasingly common from the eighteenth century, identifying labels are included which aids the identification of similarly depicted sites, essential in the seriality of representation in which the specific place only has meaning within the context of other places (Seastrand 2013, 217).

The likeness or "copy" of a site-specific deity of pilgrimage fame elsewhere is a common practice in the far south of India, as discussed above, yet this rarely extended to the conscious replication of a temple's design, layout or topography until around the past century. The Raṅganātha temple at Srirangam and the Ātmanātha at Avudaiyarkoyil both, for example, unusually face south rather than the more common temple alignment of east or west, yet shrine "copies" to these deities elsewhere do not necessarily face south in conscious evocation of their prototype. Shrines dedicated to Naṭarāja are positioned either within a small shrine in the interior of the *mahāmaṇḍapa* ("great hall", outer of the series of enclosed halls before a temple's *garbhagṛha* or *sanctum sanctorum*) or later, from the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, as a larger structure in the northeast corner of one of the outer *prākāras* of Śiva temples, but in both cases they normally face south (Orr 2021). Such an alignment and the later southward extensions to such shrines may have evoked the pre-eminent Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram, where the main image of dancing Śiva is unusually aligned in that direction. Any similarities of temple layout may then be indicative of shared ritual functions or other factors, some of which may be evident in *āgamic* literature, rather than the conscious architectural emulation of a specific temple. But some temple layouts are sufficiently unusual to suggest explanations based upon shared religious affiliation, patronage or specific groups of mobile architects (*sthapati*).

15 The poetic hymns to Śiva in the *Tēvāram* are arranged in two ways: according to musical modes (*paṇ*) in *paṇmuṟai* editions and according to places and regions (*talam*) in *talamuṟai* editions. See "The talamuṟai arrangement of Tēvāram" in Jean-Luc Chevillard & S.A.S. Sarma (eds.), *Digital Tēvāram*. https://www.ifpindia.org/digitaldb/site/digital_tevaram/.

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Fig. 6: Ceiling paintings of the 275 Śaiva sacred sites. Ātmanātha (Śiva) temple, Avudaiyarkoyil, early eighteenth century (photo by the author).

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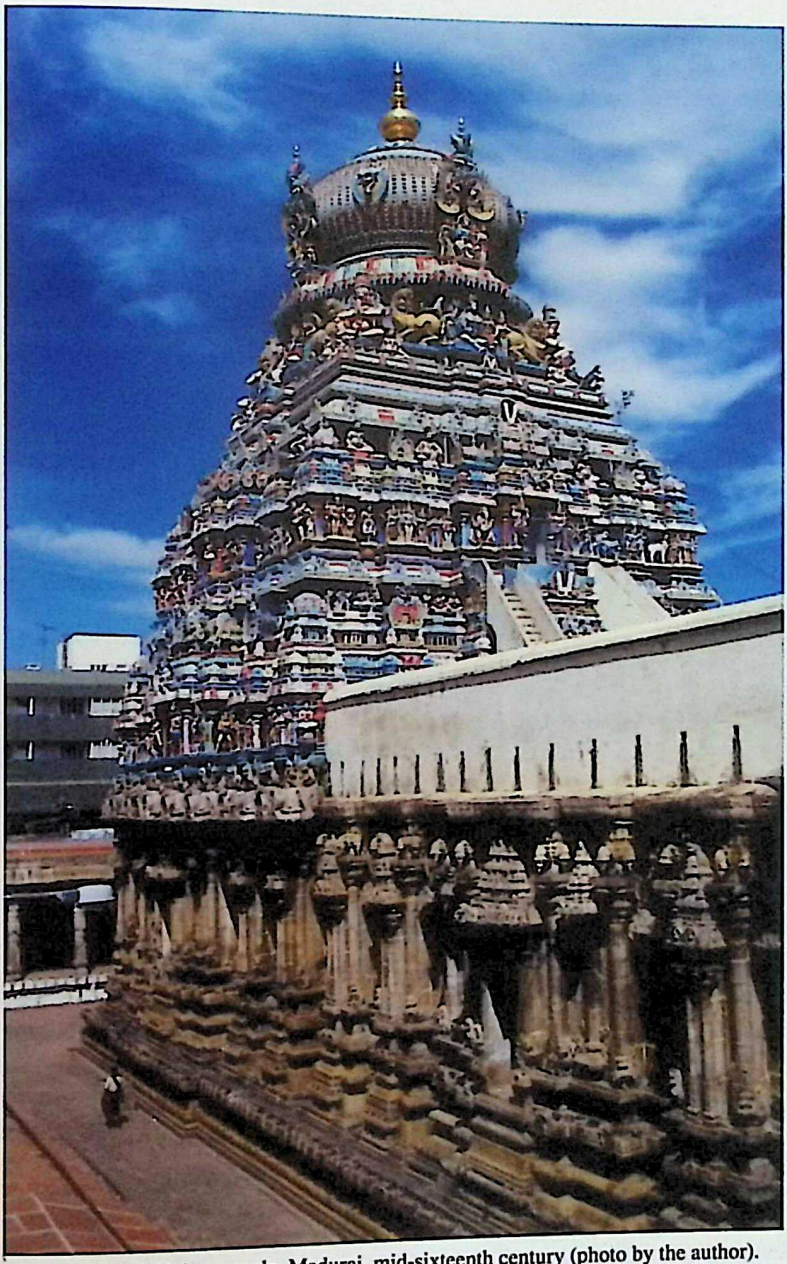

Fig. 7: Kūṭal Aḻakar temple, Madurai, mid-sixteenth century (photo by the author).

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Tamil temples tend to be arranged on a single level, and the interior of *vimānas* are hollow above the enclosed *garbhagṛha*. Here it is important to emphasise that the external design of a Drāviḍa *vimāna* divided into multiple storeys or *talas*, characterised by rows of miniature buildings, does not necessarily correspond with a functional interior layout: only a few *tritala vimānas* have three vertically arranged *garbhagṛhas*. But some Tamil temples do have multi-storey interiors, especially a small group of Vaiṣṇava temples with three vertical shrines, one above the other, containing the three forms of Viṣṇu within: one standing, one seated and one reclining (*sthānaka*, *āsana*, *śayāna*). The earliest surviving temple of this type may also be the best known: the later eighth-century Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ at Kanchipuram. Others include the ninth-century Sundaravarada at Uttaramerur in northern Tamilnadu, which may have been in conscious emulation of the former, and many more in Pandyanadu further south, including the Rājagopāla temple at Mannarkudi near Ambasamudram, the Saumyanārāyaṇa at Tirukkoshtiyur and the Kūṭal Aḻakar in Madurai, all rebuilt in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries on earlier foundations (figure 7). Some currently single-storey temples may have been originally three-storeyed prior to later renovations. Dennis Hudson has sought to demonstrate that the Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ temple at Kanchipuram and its sculpted programme was designed according to a single yet complex religious vision consistent with the *Bhagavadgīta*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* and the poems of the *āḻvārs*, and was considered a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* through which devotees would move through (Hudson 2008, 11). Whether this architectural and religious vision was shared with other three-storey temples, even those with differing orientation or vertical arrangements for the three forms of Viṣṇu, and whether the conception stemmed from Kanchipuram and was disseminated south to create an unfolding network of related temples across the Tamil South remains as yet unclear.

A curious, unique layout for a temple may be found in the two-storey Vaṭapatraśāyī temple in Srivilliputtur, with seated Narasiṃha and his consort in a small lower shrine (rarely visited) with reclining Viṣṇu above. Was this intended to have three rather than two storeys, with seated and standing Viṣṇus above and below the reclining image in its upper shrine? It may be possible that the seated image of Narasiṃha with his *śakti* in the lower shrine is a later replacement, but there is little in the temple's design to suggest a change of conception. The Vaiṣṇava poet-saints Periyāḻvār and Āṇṭāḷ make no mention of the three postures of Viṣṇu in their praise for the lord of Srivilliputtur, unlike their visualization of Perumāḷ in the three-storey Kūṭal Aḻakar temple at Madurai. In the earliest inscriptions no mention is made of Narasiṃha or multiple forms of Viṣṇu; the Lord's temple is named Vaṭaperuṅkōyil, "the great temple of the banyan leaf". This unusual temple at Srivilliputtur may be compared with another important Tamil Vaiṣṇava temple, the Varadarāja in Kanchipuram far to the north that reached its greatest extent with four enclosure walls and multiple large *gopurams* in the seventeenth century. Here, Varadarāja stands upon an artificial mound named Hastigiri in a shrine similarly capped by a

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rectangular *śālā* roof, a design normally reserved for wide *garbhagṛhas* containing reclining images or numerous adjacent deities. Beneath Varadarāja is a small shrine within the hill containing Narasiṃha, as at Srivilliputtur, but here seated in *yogāsana* and without his consort. Āṇṭāḷ is also present, together with the local consort Malaiyāḷa Nācciyār, in east-facing shrines on the same level as Narasiṃha and below Viṣṇu as Varadarāja. The connection between Teṉkalai Srivilliputtur and predominantly Vaṭakalai Kanchipuram may seem striking given the historic tension between the "southern" and "northern" sects of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. But the polarity between the two may have been over-stressed in theological terms, the conflicts are largely recent and only from the nineteenth century, and there was certainly a greater degree of ritual overlap in the past between the two worshipping communities. In Srivilliputtur, the great Vaṭakalai *ācārya* Vedānta Deśika is highly regarded; Kanchipuram was his hometown and Varadarāja the focus of his devotion.

Fig. 8: 'Vijayanagara symbols' on third *prākāra* wall. Periyanāyaki Amman temple, Devikapuram, early sixteenth century (photo by the author)

Patrons, Artists and Temple Networks

Another way in which we might consider the formation and maintenance of temple networks from an architectural perspective is by considering clusters defined by patronage or dynasty. It is common-place to describe Tamil temples as being built in a "Chola style", as if the temples built by the dynasty could be distinguished in terms

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of form or aspects of design from other contemporary temples built in the Tamil Drāviḍa tradition by other patrons. Given the paucity of evidence for the royal patronage of temples, apart from some well-known exceptions, and the negligible direct evidence that named individual patrons had any impact on temple design, any sense of connections between temples in terms of design may better be understood regionally rather than stemming from shared patronage. Some regional distinctions and preferences may be discerned: the very shallow niches with no space for sculpted images of deities in tenth-twelfth century temples in Pandyanadu, for example, in contrast to temples of a similar date built in Cholanadu or the central Kaveri delta region (Kaimal 1996; Orr 2007). But this is a symptom of artistic practice not the agency of patrons and we know precious little about medieval and early modern Tamil *sthapatis* (architect, master builder, stone-mason)—their names, birthplaces, relationship with patrons, rates of pay, working methods, education, mobility—until around 1900.

But sometimes artistic evidence—a particular design, motif or sculptural arrangement—may suggest connections between temples that can then be explored through other evidence, such as literature or inscriptions. For example, a striking and suggestively imperial motif disseminated across the Vijayanagara Empire was the "Vijayanagara symbol": the boar in profile alongside an erect sword and often with an adjacent sun and moon.[16] The striking proliferation of this motif on the monumental *gopuram* at Srikalahasti built by Krishnadeva (reigned 1509–1530)—there were fifty such symbols, each ca. thirty by forty centimetres—and on other monuments from the same period in the Tamil country suggested that this might have been a visual marker of Kṛṣṇadeva's or perhaps the Tuḷuva dynasty's patronage (ca. 1490–1570).[17] High up on the outer walls of the Periyanāyaki temple at Devikapuram, largely dating to Kṛṣṇadeva's reign and later, a band of the Vijayanagara emblem spreads all around between a row of horses and elephants (figure 8); a similar proliferation of the symbol runs all around the outermost wall of the Vaṭāraṇyēśvara temple at Tiruvalangadu. A wider survey of this emblem's deployment on temple architecture indicates that it cannot be so defined chronologically to the Tuḷuva dynasty alone for it appears on a few monuments before the 1490s at Vijayanagara and further south. But it remains a suggestive indicator of Vijayanagara periodisation—though not reliably of patronage—for a structure dating from the late fifteenth through the mid-sixteenth century but not later in the Tamil region.

Imperial patronage of temples, including the Veṅkaṭeśvara at Tirupati, and other religious institutions by Kṛṣṇadeva and his successors served to integrate conquered

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16 The boar or Varāha *avatāra* as a royal symbol was used by a number of dynasties in the Deccan and South India from the seventh century, but not in combination with the sword, which was new in the Vijayanagara context. The sun and moon are included with inscriptions to indicate their perpetuity (Saletore 1982, 183–184).

17 The huge *gopuram* at Srikalahasti collapsed in May 2010 and a new one was built by 2017.

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areas and link them culturally to the state at the height of the trans-regional Vijayanagara empire (Stoker 2016, 132–133). Kṛṣṇadeva travelled widely on pilgrimage across southern India, visiting many of the most important Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva temples including Tirupati and nearby Srikalahasti and further south to Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, Srirangam and Rameshvaram. At some sites he made donations of jewels for the deity or villages and land to support temple rituals for their honour; at others he sponsored the construction of new festival *maṇḍapas* for the display of deities and monumental *gopurams*, as at Srikalahasti and Tiruvannamalai. The widespread epigraphic evidence for his pious donations is joined by a few examples of donor portrait-images, such as the near life-size copper alloy images of Kṛṣṇadeva and his two wives set up at Tirupati and a small stone image identified as the king in a niche within the gateway of the north *gopuram* of the Naṭarāja temple at Chidambaram that was completed following his visit in 1516. The location of life-size portrait sculptures of the Madurai ruler Tirumalai Nāyaka (reigned 1623–1659) at several temples in the far south of Tamilnadu are similarly suggestive of the institutional links between these sacred sites that he may have sustained. Among the best-known Tamil portrait sculptures are the genealogical series of Tirumalai Nāyaka and his nine predecessors within the "New Hall" (*putumaṇṭapam*) built around 1630 adjacent to the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara temple in Madurai. Further images identified as Tirumalai Nāyaka and his brother Muttu Vīrappa are located in both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples across southern Tamilnadu, including Alagarkoyil, Tirupparankundram and Tiruppuvanam around Madurai and to the north in the Raṅganātha temple at Srirangam and to the south at Srivilliputtur and Padmanabhapuram. Collectively they testify to the spread of the king's patronage of temples across the territory ruled by the Madurai Nāyakas in the early seventeenth century (Branfoot 2012, 2018).

Temple Urbanism, Pilgrimage Networks and Festival Ritual

Temple networks may be ritually performed by pilgrims moving from one shrine to another, such as between the Navatirupatis mentioned above. Pilgrims to Rameshvaram on the *setuyātrā*, the pilgrimage to the Setu or "causeway" to Lanka, for example, may also visit other nearby sites and temples associated with events in the *Rāmāyaṇa*: these may include the Ādi Jagannātha Perumāḷ temple at Tiruppullani on the mainland where Rāma lay on the grass in penance (*darbhaśayāna*) to propitiate the ocean before building the bridge to Lanka; around the island upon which Rameshvaram is located, such as to Danushkodi where Rāma broke the bridge to Lanka with the tip of his bow after defeating Rāvaṇa; as well as a series of *tīrthas* (sacred water pools) within the temple itself, as they retrace Rāma's route (Vanamamalai Pillai 1929). Such pilgrimage practices have an architectural and spatial dimension in the historical development of temples, *maṇḍapas*, water-filled tanks and other seemingly insignificant structures built at and between a connected group

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of sacred sites. Networks of temples may also be performed in the festival movement of deities in and around cities, to related temples nearby and further afield, occasionally as much as twenty-thirty miles away. Contemporary ethnography of festival practice can reveal the occasions when deities are on the move and the routes taken, as well as the occasions when different temples' festivals collaborate, intersect or overlap. Some festivals can be historicised from the increasing volume of inscriptions naming and dating them. But few temples have such extensive, site-specific evidence for the antiquity or provision of festivals and processions. Inscriptions referring to festivals do not routinely mention processions, instead more commonly referring to food offerings for the deity and devotees, the bathing and adorning of the god's image, and other arrangements such as the provision of lamps, garlands and the singing of hymns (Orr 2004). Furthermore, inscriptions only occasionally mention the spaces and buildings of processions, or the objects carried and thus how processions may be understood spatially remains difficult to reconstruct for the past. The historical development of buildings specifically designed for festival use, such as festival pavilions (*utsavamaṇḍapas*) and temple tanks for the floating festival (*teppakuḷams*), may also reveal the impact of ritual change both on an individual temple and its subsidiary structures, and its connections with other temples nearby (Branfoot 2020).

Further fruitful collaborative research might develop more detailed building histories of temples and their related festival structures within the urban fabric of cities, in order to establish what was built and when. This may provide additional evidence to reconstruct such festival routes and connections alongside the dynamic evidence of modern temple practice and the study of site-specific *māhātmyas* and *sthalapurāṇas* to our exploration of the construction of temple networks in early modern (fifteenth-eighteenth century) Tamil South India. In Srivilliputtur, for example, the Āṇṭāḷ and Vaṭapatraśāyī temples at the centre of the town are animated by the movement of devotees inward and around the various shrines, and by the processions of the deities themselves within each of the respective the temple's walls and out and around town. The processions of major festivals, including those with the goddess Āṇṭāḷ and Reṅgamaṉṉar (Viṣṇu) on a variety of "vehicles" (*vāhanas*) and for the annual "chariot" (*tēr*) procession proceed around the wider outer streets. Less important festival processions, such as those for the male *āḻvārs'* birthday processions move around the inner streets. The ritual network of these two adjacent temples spreads into the surrounding town and further afield to several other temples up to twenty miles away, whose deities periodically travel to Srivilliputtur for festival occasions (Venkatesan and Branfoot 2014, 85–96). A comparable examination of the ritual landscape of Kanchipuram in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has identified the respective routes taken by Varadarāja (Viṣṇu), Ekāmbareśvara (Śiva) and the goddess Kāmākṣī, mapping and spatializing the intersecting and competing networks of festival processions within the city (Hüsken 2017).

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Conclusion

What then can the study of temple architecture—their locations within urban fabrics, their spatial layouts and details of design or ornament—offer to the interpretation of the making, sustenance and meanings of temple networks in early modern Tamil South India? The creation of links and connections between temples and their construction and visualisation in design and ornament was only a gradual process from the fourteenth-fifteenth century, even if the roots can be traced earlier, especially for the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. It is only from the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries that the expansion of such temple networks began to be consolidated by artists and builders, as the artistic record suggests. This is evident in the increasing numbers of subsidiary shrines dedicated to distant site-specific deities, shared aspects of design or layout, or the depiction of particular sites in sculpted reliefs or painted murals. Religious specialists, sectarian institutions and leaders may have used their authority to create links among temples and such connections may be evident in contemporary literature or inscriptions; indeed, the major period for the composition of *sthalapurāṇas* in Tamil is between 1500 and 1900. But networks between temples are also performed by deities carried in procession and by pilgrims traversing the landscape between sacred places, and for these we need to look carefully for their material traces.

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Grounding the Texts: Kanchi's Urban Logic and Ambitious Extensions[1]

Emma Natalya Stein (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.)

Introduction

Railway Road marks the unofficial eastern border of Kanchipuram's urban core but not the end of the city's expanse. A lofty gateway, modeled after a traditional *toraṇa* (archway leading to a temple), announces that crossing Railway Road will soon lead to the neighborhood of Māmallaṉ Nagar (figure 1). Here some of the roads are unpaved but the houses are made of poured concrete, brightly painted in flat planes of primary colors (figure 2). A four-storey home boasts three lotiform balconies accentuated with pink and white flourishes. This grid-like, suburban sprawl follows the railway tracks east for a spell, then gives way to eventual paddy fields and the flood plain of Nathapettai Lake.

Māmallaṉ Nagar's name is drawn from *Mahāmalla*, an epithet of the Pallava dynasty that ruled much of northern Tamil Nadu using Kanchi as their royal capital from the third through the ninth century, and from Mamallapuram, the Pallava's seaside town. The neighborhood's central street is named after the great Pallava king, Mahendravarman I (ca. 580–630 CE), who is credited with commissioning the first temples in the region to be made of stone. Although such titles suggest a desire to connect the neighborhood with historical Kanchi, Māmallaṉ Nagar is a new development advertising ready-to-occupy, budget homes. It bears little resemblance to the historical city.

However, the formation and development of this neighborhood represent much more ancient processes of urbanization that have been at work in Kanchi for millennia. Māmallaṉ Nagar's expanding footprint once belonged to the rural hinterland that

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1 This paper is developed alongside aspects of my book project, *Constructing Kanchi: City of Infinite Temples* (Stein 2021). Printed with permission. Field research was generously supported by Yale's South Asian Studies Council and History of Art department (2013–2014), the American Institute of Indian Studies (2014–2015), and the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian (2020). My sincere thanks go to Ute Hüsken, Jonas Buchholz, and Malini Ambach for giving me the opportunity to return to South India in early 2020, and to A. Valavan and Annadurai (Kanchi), and Babu Ramaswamy (École Française d'Extrême-Orient Pondichérry) for their valuable insights over the years and their generous sharing of information that can only be gleaned through local knowledge.

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still surrounds much of the city. Now, as in the past, the natural landscape is being incrementally converted into settled, civic construction. Flows of water are being diverted, soft surfaces transformed into hard ones. Temporary structures are being replaced with buildings made of more durable and more fashionable materials. Schools and temples are being built, and new populations or sectors of society are arriving.

Fig.1: Gateway to Māmallaṉ Nagar, Kanchi.

Māmallaṉ Nagar is the newest neighborhood in this eastern part of Kanchi. If we were to turn east off Railway Road a half-kilometer farther south, we would instead encounter a very different type of settlement (figure 5). Here the streets are circuitous as opposed to gridded. This enclave is a more ancient place that was transformed over time from a rural area into a part of the city. It is known variously as Tirukkāli-mēṭu and Vēppaṅkuḷam. Although many of the people here work inside the urban center, the area retains a sense of autonomy. Residents have lived here for many generations and the local knowledge about the area and about Kanchi runs deep.

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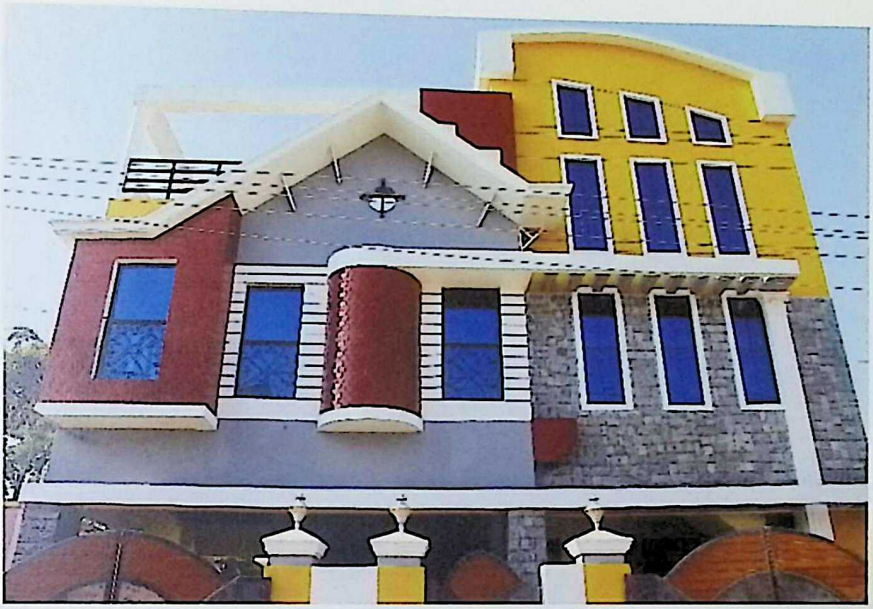

Fig. 2: House in Māmallaṉ Nagar, Kanchi.

Fig. 5: Tirukkālimēṭu village, Kanchi.

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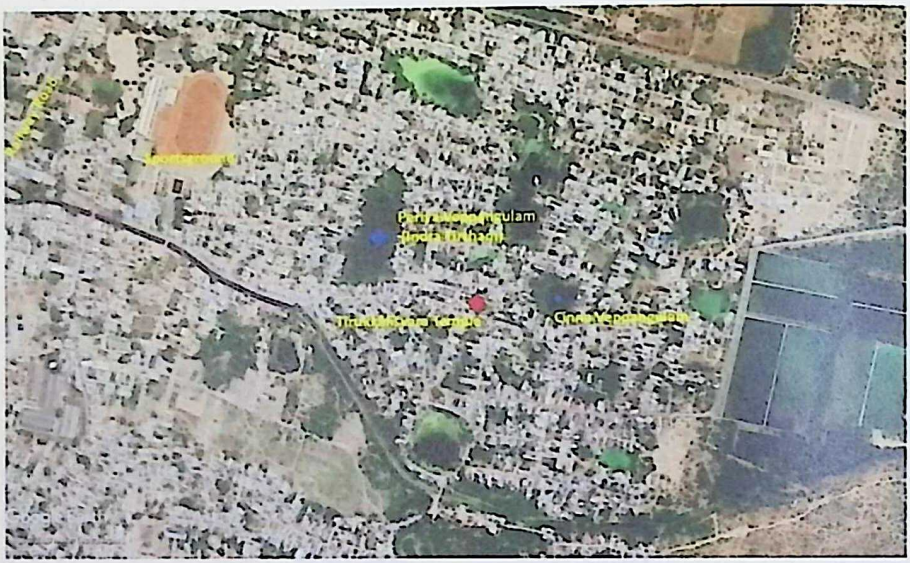

Fig. 6: Tirukkālimēṭu village.

Fig. 7: *Ciṉṉa* (little) Vēppaṅkuḷam, Tirukkālimēṭu.

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Each name for the enclave is derived from an aspect of the local topography or perhaps the society who lived there in the past. The name Vēppaṅkuḷam [neem tree + pond] refers to a neem tree-surrounded pond that provides water for the village. Today, there is not one but two ponds known as *Vēppaṅkuḷam* (figure 6). *Ciṉṉa* (little) *Vēppaṅkuḷam* is a circular pond enclosed on all sides by the backs of wooden houses that are built in Kanchi's local domestic architectural style (figure 7). *Periya* (big) *Vēppaṅkuḷam* is a larger, oval-shaped pond that is also known by its Puranic name, Indra Tīrtham. It is difficult to know which pond is the eponymous *Vēppaṅkuḷam*, if indeed it is not both.

Fig. 8: Tirukkālīśvara temple, Tirukkālimēṭu.

As for Tirukkālimēṭu, the suffix *-mēṭu* has a dual etymology. Literally defined as "eminence, little hill, hillock, ridge, or rising ground" (*Tamil Lexicon*), *-mēṭu* can be used to mean a physically high expanse of land, but it can also refer to the place where the higher echelons of society dwell. For example, while *paḷḷu teru* (low street) is where workers and lower caste members live, *mēṭu teru* (high street) is reserved for higher castes, such as brahmins and ruling elites.[2] That *-mēṭu* here likely refers to the social rather than the physical landscape can be seen through a topographical map. At only eighty meters above sea level, Tirukkālimēṭu has one of the lowest elevations in the city.[3]

2 My thanks to A. Valavan for alerting me to this dual meaning, and for providing the example.
3 https://en-ca.topographic-map.com/maps/87a/Kanchipuram/ (accessed July 2020).

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According to senior residents, Tirukkālimēṭu and Vēppaṅkuḷam are not exactly the same village, but the borders are ambiguous and the names are used interchangeably. Two names for an area can comfortably coexist. Since Tirukkālimēṭu is the name more frequently used today, I will refer to the area as Tirukkālimēṭu.[4]

Besides the lay of the streets and a connection with the natural landscape in the local nomenclature, a characteristic of this older type of settlement is the presence of a prominent temple that functions both as a place of worship and as a community center for residents and occasional visitors to gather. In Tirukkālimēṭu and many similar villages in northern Tamil Nadu, the temple is made of granite stone and was built during the Chola era (ca. 850–1275 CE). Often the Chola-period temple is a reconstruction from an even earlier shrine that had been made of less permanent materials, such as brick and wood. The Chola construction could then be renovated and expanded or added to in subsequent centuries. Constructional activity facilitated the life of the temple, as it continues to do today.

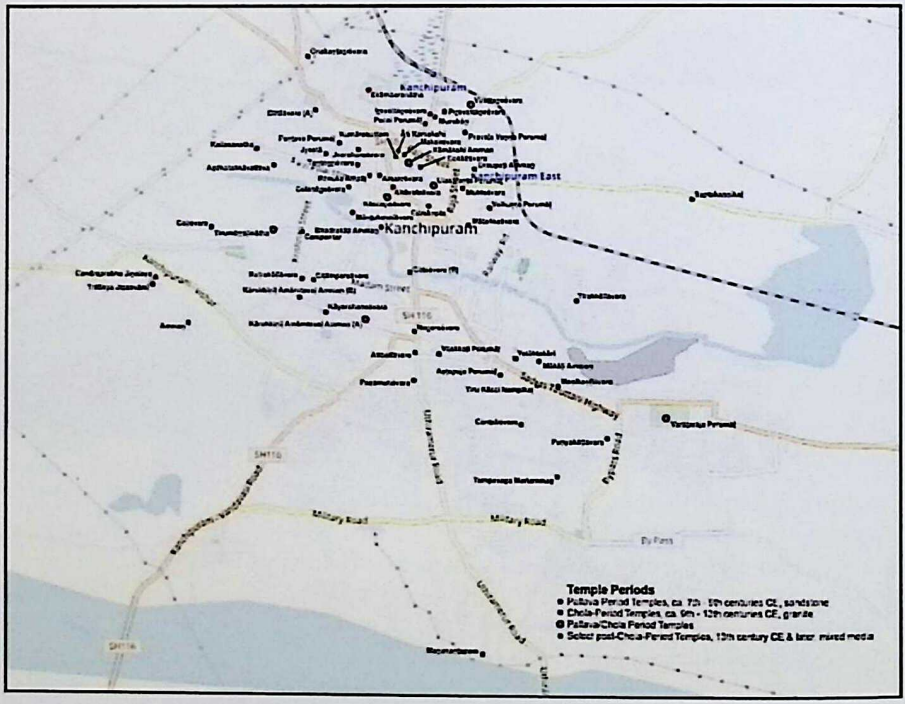

Fig. 9: Kanchi temple map (Stein 2017).

4 I am grateful to A. Valavan for providing the local knowledge about nomenclature, and for being an invaluable fountain of local histories.

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In Tirukkālimēṭu, the main temple is situated directly between the two neem tree ponds, on the south side of Tirukkālimēṭu Street, the main point of access from Railway Road into the enclave (figure 8). It is a stately stone structure with a shrine (*vimāna*) and vestibule (*ardhamaṇḍapa*) that date to the late tenth or early eleventh century, and surrounding enclosures (*prākāra*) and a gated entryway (*gopura*) that were added in the sixteenth century.[5] Like the village and its ponds, the temple has several names. Locals and Kanchi residents refer to the temple as Tirukkālīśvara (for the Lord who dwells at Tirukkālimēṭu). The signboard at the temple's entry announces the god as Satyanāthasvāmī. Devout elders call the temple Kacci Neṟi Kāraikkāṭu, a variant of which also appears below Satyanāthasvāmī on the signboard and is the name used in the *Tēvāram* hymn by Campantar. And in the temple's inscriptions, the name is Tirukkāraikkāṭu, similar to Kacci Neṟi Kāraikkāṭu, and the god is Tirukkāraikkāṭu-Mahādēvar or Tirukkāraikkāṭu-uṭaiyār. For the purposes of this essay, I will refer to the temple with the most common local name, Tirukkālīśvara.

Kanchipuram grew into a city in an agglomerative manner, which means that autonomous villages like Tirukkālimēṭu were gradually incorporated into the urban area. A widely known example is the part of town now called Little-Kanchi. This was originally the independent village of Attiyūr, which became part of Kanchi in the thirteenth century. Up until that time, inscriptions refer to Attiyūr as distinct from Kanchi, but a record reportedly on the north wall of the second *prākāra* at the Varadarāja Perumāḷ temple mentions *kāñcipurattu-tiruvattiyūr*, meaning "Attiyūr, a part of Kanchi" (*SII* IV no. 859-860). The inscription documents the conjoining of two parts of the city that would always remain uneasily separated. In the sixteenth century, former Attiyūr accrued the epithet Viṣṇu-Kanchi due to the predominance of the Varadarāja Perumāḷ and other Viṣṇu temples in the area (Mahalingam 1991, Tp.-1460, 322–323).

It was precisely through the building of temples that Kanchi became the compact city that it is today, and that its scope expanded in the proverbial four directions. Kanchi was a major political, commercial, and sacred epicenter during the era of stone temple construction under the Pallava and Chola dynasties, especially during the eighth through thirteenth centuries (figure 9). In this essay I focus primarily on the Chola-era city, which I refer to as "Chola-Kanchi," meaning not only the royal precincts but the entire political and cultural milieu of Kanchi during the era. The Chola's city established and entrenched a sacred geography that still undergirds the city. This geography was unique, not described in any text, and deeply rooted in a local sense of spatiality expressed through the placement of temples. Overlaying the local urban structure, the circulation of a cosmopolitan population and ritual culture widened the scope of the city.

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5 The earliest noticed inscription on the temple dates to ca. 1018 CE, and the *vimāna* and *ardhamaṇḍapa* conform to the architectural style of that period. My thanks to Crispin Branfoot for confirming on-site a sixteenth-century date for the expansions.

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The essay first sketches the basic footprint of the Chola city as it compares with the urban area we encounter today. I consider a plausible location for a royal palace, and a main road that served multiple functions as a point of passage and of orientation for the city and its temples. I then return us to the village of Tirukkālimēṭu and its temple as a case study of an area that retains a sense of independence despite its connection with the city. By correlating the physical and mythological histories of the temple with features of the natural landscape and records contained in inscriptions, we can see on the micro level processes at work on a larger scale and with greater complexity throughout historical Kanchi. Through the establishment of temples and the laying of roads that led to them, Kanchi became a great city.

Fig. 10: Lakṣita cave-temple, Maṇṭakappaṭṭu.

Chola-Kanchi

In art historical and political histories of South India, Kanchi is best known as a Pallava city. Famed for their sponsorship of literature and temple architecture, the Pallavas fixed their seat in Kanchi from the third through the ninth centuries and were among the great South Indian dynasties. Technologies of building for sacred edifices radically transformed under their reign. Previously reserved for funerary architecture, stone became the preferred material for building elite temples. King Mahendravarman I (ca. 580–630 CE) sponsored the very first cave-temple in the Tamil speaking region, situated in the village of Maṇṭakappaṭṭu, and he had its façade

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inscribed with a famous verse that lay claim to this new technique. *Vicitracitta* (brilliant minded), he had fashioned a home for Brahmā, Śiva, and Viṣṇu without the use of brick, timber, metal, or mortar (figure 10) (*EI* XVII, no. 5).

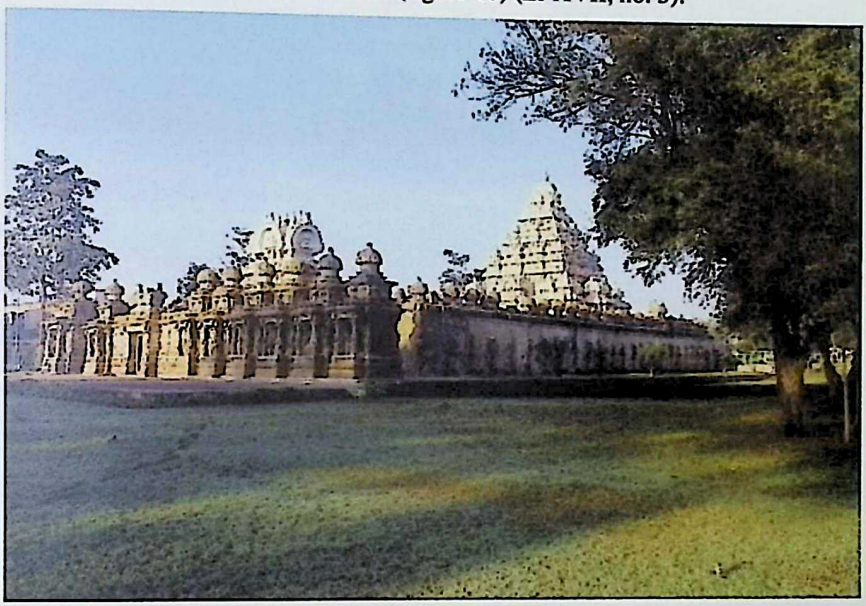

Fig. 11: Kailāsanātha temple, Kanchi.

Once construction of temples in stone was established, the practice steadily increased in complexity and sophistication. Temples made fully or partially of brick continued to be built—even at the elite level—for centuries, but stone became a significant and widely favored choice.

The Pallavas' artistic legacy is best materialized in their monumental Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchi (figure 11). Built under royal patronage by King Rājasiṃha in the first quarter of the eighth century, the Kailāsanātha was among the largest freestanding temples in the entire Indian subcontinent at the time of its construction. Its scale, as well as its aesthetic and formal virtuosity, were unprecedented. The compound included a large central shrine and freestanding entry hall, surrounded by an enclosure wall of crenelated, single-occupancy shrines. Each space in the temple was conducive to different classifications of ritual activity (figure 12). Although the Kailāsanātha is not presently a central focus of devotion in Kanchi, it continues to draw attention, primarily from foreign travelers who visit the temple for its finely carved and painted figures of deities, its intricate ornamental motifs, and its florid inscriptions, all of which cover nearly every surface of the walls.

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Fig. 12: Kailāsanātha temple, Kanchi.

The Kailāsanātha and some of the other Pallava temples, most notably the Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ, have dominated scholarly research on Kanchi (Gillet 2010; Hudson 2008; Kaimal 2021). These studies help us understand much about the development of courtly culture, streams of religious praxis such as Śaiva Siddhānta, the evolution of architectural knowledge and techniques in South India, as well as colonial-era reception and afterlives of temples, including the formation of the Archaeological Survey of India. However, the tight focus on one or even several Pallava temples cannot accommodate a broader view of the city. Consequently, the myriad other temples in Kanchi have been overlooked, even those that stand just meters away from the Pallava edifices.

If we move away from the Pallava temples and take a bird's eye view of the city, we begin to see that Kanchi is a structured urban landscape that is peppered with manifold temples (see fig. 9). Many of the old temples can still be found—or at least bits and pieces of them. Sometimes entire shrines survive. More often, however, fragments are built into later walls or transformed almost beyond recognition through centuries of renovations and expansions. In addition to the more than thirty full temples that survive from the eighth through thirteenth centuries, dozens of shrines and fragments can still give us a picture of a city packed with temples.

At least twenty-five stone temples in Kanchi date to the Chola period, and disengaged sculptures attest to the former presence of a far greater number. Six temples bear inscriptions and have an architectural style that corresponds with other

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dated tenth-century temples. A dozen extant temples can be dated to the eleventh century through similar means. Construction continued in the twelfth century, most notably with the Jvarahareśvara temple, an ornate construction with no parallel in northern Tamil Nadu. Well into the thirteenth century, temples continued to be built, renovated, realigned, and expanded. It was also in this period that the bulk of village areas within and around Kanchi was subsumed by or integrated into the city. In subsequent centuries, under the auspices of the Vijayanagara rulers, many temple complexes were expanded or redesigned significantly, and roads were widened to facilitate access to them. Villages like Tirukkālimēṭu and temples like Tirukkālīśvara increasingly became integrated with the city.

Fig. 14: Central Kanchi, with *maṇḍapas* marked in yellow.

Nearly all of the temples dedicated to Śiva that have physical components from the Pallava or Chola period find their way into the *Kāñcippurāṇam*, one of Kanchi's legendary histories (see the contribution by Buchholz in this volume). Jonas Buchholz has undertaken correlating the temples mentioned in this text with existing shrines in Kanchi. The only temples with ancient components that are not mentioned are the Ruṭrakoṭīśvara temple and the Pallava-era Mukteśvara temple. Ruṭrakoṭī-śvara is a small temple that houses a Pallava-era fragment of a lion-based pillar on the premises. The temple's main structure is quite recent and would not have been built at the time the text was composed. The presence of a Pallava-era fragment generally indicates that the temple site is ancient, but it is possible that this particular

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pillar base was moved to a newly established site because it is the only early component in the entire complex.

The *Kāñcippurāṇam* does not give any special priority to the older temples. Instead, it seems to aim at a comprehensive cataloguing of sacred places in the city dedicated to the deity of choice. In this way, Kanchi's history is homogenized for religious purposes, yet living local knowledge both acknowledges and preserves the city's layered history. In addition to Ekāmbaranātha, Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ, and Varadarāja Perumāḷ, less widely known temples including Kāyārohaṇeśvara, Karukkiṉil Amaṟṟavaḷ, Tirumēṟṟaḷinātha, Tirukkālīśvara, and Brahmapurīśvara (in Tēṉampākkam, a Kanchi outpost similar to Tirukkālīmēṭu) are known to Kanchi's elder generations as important sites specifically because they are ancient. Some of the priests are familiar with the inscriptions and the temples' physical as well as religious histories. For these members of society, multiple truths can comfortably coexist in the space of a single temple—each temple in Kanchi can simultaneously be "one thousand years old" and have a very specific date of construction in the Pallava, Chola, Vijayanagara, or more recent era. Historical and mythological time are not mutually exclusive.

Royal Palace

The Chola city lay the basic footprint of the urban area we encounter today.[6] While temples provide tangible pinpoints, certain absences in the built environment indicate other civic structures that have not survived, such as a royal palace.

Made of perishable materials as it would have been, the remains of a palace can no longer be detected. However, inscriptions affirm that there was a Chola palace in Kanchi by at least the tenth century, and that it was recognized as a legitimate administrative headquarters throughout the Chola's domain. Dated to ca. 998 CE, an important copper plate charter records an order that the king made while he was seated in the *citramaṇḍapa* (painted hall) of his golden palace at Kanchi.[7] This order concerned the expenditures and income of the Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ temple, over which he apparently held jurisdiction. On the royally sponsored Bṛhadīśvara temple at Gangaikondacholapuram, an inscription dated ca. 1068 records another order regarding temple expenditures that was given by the Chola king Vīrarājendra while sitting in his palace in Kanchi (*ARE* 1892, no. 82; *SII* IV, no. 529; Mahalingam 1991, 322–323).[8]

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6 My field surveys of temples correlate well with epigraphic studies by James Heitzman, who arrives at the same conclusion about the footprint of the city (Heitzman and Rajagopal 2004).

7 For discussion of this charter (Uttama Cōḻa, 986 CE), see Nagaswamy 2011, 19–24.

8 The record is on the northwest corner of the monument and is dated in the king's fifth regnal year (ca. 1068 CE). See also Ali 2012.

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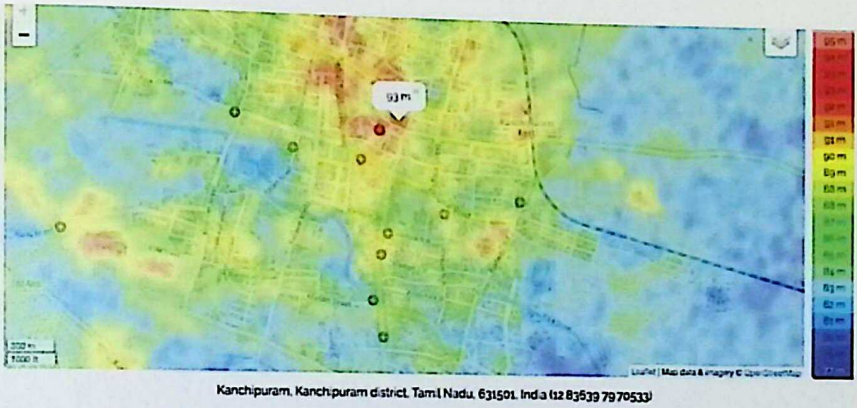

Fig. 15: Topographical map of Kanchi, courtesy https://en-ca.topographic-map.com/maps/87a/Kanchipuram/

An area that is devoid of historical remains at the very center of Kanchi suggests the site where the royal palace likely stood. The palace's former presence is indicated first by four broad streets arranged in a square around a noticeably elevated region, spanning half a kilometer on each side (figure 14). At ninety-three meters above sea level according to topographical studies of Kanchi, this is one of the highest points in the otherwise relatively uniform city (figure 15).[9] The four streets are called the Rāja Vītis, meaning king's streets. There is an East, West, North, and South Rāja Vīti.

At the square's four corners, as well as at the place where the southern Rāja Vīti is met by a large north-south running road (to which we will return), the remains of stone and mixed-media pavilions (*maṇḍapas*) can be detected through layers of urban development (figure 16-17). Some of these *maṇḍapas* have become shelters for makeshift restaurants or repair shops, while others have accrued street-side shrines as well as monumental billboards built up against their walls. Difficult to see as the original structure is, these vestiges of the ancient city are easily overlooked. Even local residents pass by them daily without taking notice. However, their combination of granite, sandstone, and brick construction is matched only by the ancient parts of temples in the city (figure 19). While the pillars and architectural elements in the *maṇḍapas'* street-facing sections appear to date to the Vijayanagara period—probably the sixteenth century when ample construction was taking place in the city—other parts of the structure may well be older.

9 Elevations range from approximately 83–93 meters above sea level. https://en-ca.topographic-map.com/maps/87a/Kanchipuram/ (accessed July 2020).

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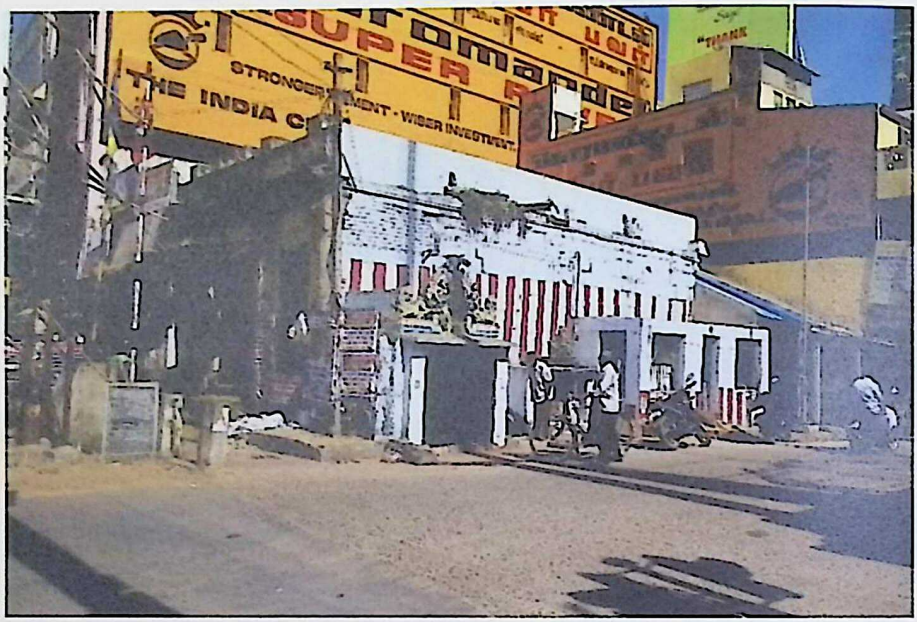

Fig. 16: *Maṇḍapa* on west side of main road in central Kanchi.

Fig. 17: *Maṇḍapa* on east side of main road in central Kanchi.

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Fig. 19: *Maṇḍapas* in central Kanchi, seen from above.

Rather than having a building at the center, the Rāja Vīti streets enclose a dense buildup of shops and domestic structures. Also within the square is the tenth-century shrine of Cokkeśvara and the larger temple complexes of Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ and Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ, which both have portions that date to the Chola era. The main body of Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ was built in the eleventh century, and Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ was a cluster of earlier shrines that became unified into a large complex not before the fourteenth century.[10] Although we cannot determine the precise expanse of the palace itself, Sanskrit architectural treatises, such as the *Mayamata* (ca. tenth century), specify that royal precincts include shrines of varying sizes (see Dagens 2007). Unlike the temples and the *maṇḍapas*, the palace itself would have been made of perishable materials, such as brick and timber—the same materials employed for domestic architecture. This is why little physical evidence of palaces survives from anywhere in premodern India. A rare example of palace ruins in South India can be seen at Gangaikondacholapuram, where the brick foundation structure was exposed through excavation.[11] Visiting the site makes an informative counterpoint to the grandeur of the all-stone temple.

Literary descriptions provide us with an idealized picture of palatial complexes. Texts across a range of genres, such as the *Cilappatikāram*, the *Daśakumāracarita*,

10 For an excellent study of this temple's development, see Venkataraman 1973.

11 The excavation is reported in IAR 1955–1956, 27.

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the *Mayamata*, and the *Periyapurāṇam*, describe royal complexes as vast, sprawling compounds with fortified gates (see Ramachandra Dikshitar 1978; Onians 2005; Dagens 2007; McGlashan 2006). According to the poems of the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, specifically the *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* and the *Maturaikkāñci*, the surrounding gates and walls were made either of stone or of brick (see Krishna 1992, 2 and Rajarathnam 2000, 169). In the Sanskrit travel novel, the *Daśakumāracarita* (circa eighth century), the hero has an arduous journey to reach his beloved in the palace's inner quarters (*Daśakumāracarita*, chapter 8). He first has to cross a moat and skillfully scale a rampart, then climb up "a flight of steps built from piled baked bricks [that] led to the upper floor of the principal gate." Upon descending, he turns down avenues of tree-lined garden paths, while "feeling the bulging wall of the enormous palace" (see Onians 2005, 301–303).

In the twelfth-century hagiography of the Tamil saint Appar, petitioners assemble at Kanchi's palace gate and must explain their purpose to the guard, who serves as an intermediary (*Periyapurāṇam* 1350, see McGlashan 2006, 131). The epic *Cilappatikāram* [*Tale of the Anklet*] (variously dated between the second and ninth centuries CE) includes an episode in which the anklet's thief encounters watchmen at the gates to Madurai's palace (see Ramachandra Dikshitar 1978, 224–225).[12] Across genre and period of composition, texts place the palace in a centrally located position in the northern part of the city, just like the Rāja Vīti area in Kanchi.[13]

Royal Road

If the Cholas found an ideal place for a palace in Kanchi's naturally elevated urban core, they also managed to construct the more than proverbial *rājamārga* of Sanskrit literature, the King's Road or alternately the "king among roads."[14] Piercing the center of Kanchi is a wide avenue today known as Kamarajar Salai, which gave access to the palace precincts and branched off into a network of streets that led to the city's growing number of temples. As a major corridor through the city, by the year 1000 CE this road had stolen the city's focus. It was deemed so important that it is specifically mentioned in inscriptions on a number of Kanchi's Chola-period temples, and it endures as the city's main artery even today.[15]

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12 The walled and gated palace formation seems even to have been emulated in temporary architecture associated with military travel. Elsewhere in the text, the Chera king on a military campaign resides in a portable palace encircled by textiles supported by wooden stakes and guarded by gatekeepers (see Ramachandra Dikshitar 1978, 363).

13 The *Cilappatikāram* provides a long description of the port-city of Pukār (Canto V). Mapping out the different quarters enables one to see that the palace is situtated in the northern quarter of the city (see Ramachandra Dikshitar 1978, 322).

14 Kasdorf (2013, 69–70) reminds us that "king among roads" is a more accurate translation for *rājamārga* or *rājavīdhi* than "royal road."

15 The inscriptions are mentioned in Heitzman 2001, 127 and no. 10.

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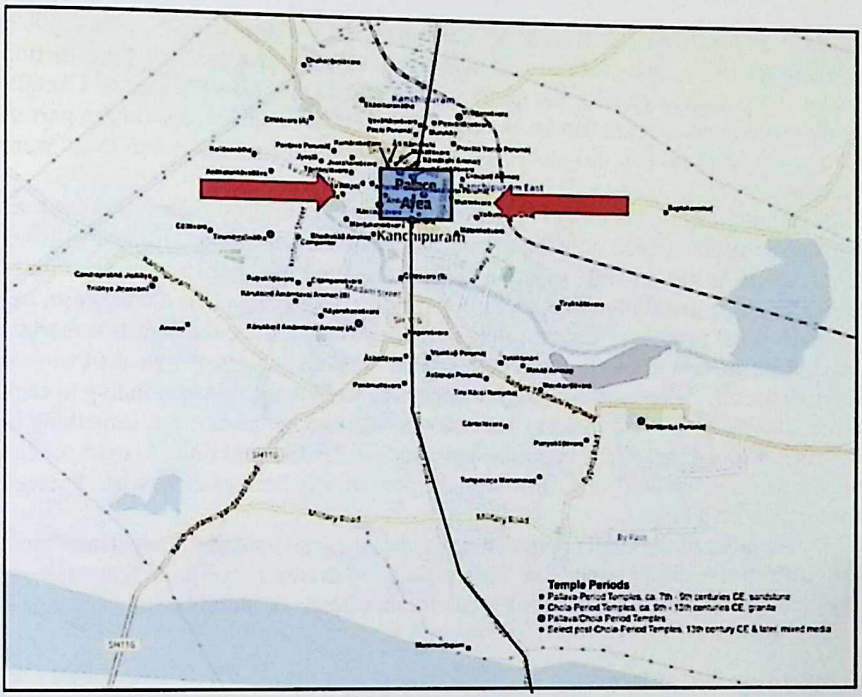

Fig. 21: Temple orientations in Kanchi.

Uniquely within Kanchi, a local convention of coordinating temples with the main road developed. The orientation (east or west) of any given temple in Kanchi was determined by the temple's spatial position in relation to the central avenue, no matter when the temple was built. To put it plainly, if the temple is situated anywhere to the west of the road its main entrance faces east, and if it is situated anywhere to the east of the road its main entrance faces west (figure 21).

This convention became fully standardized during the Chola period, and it has continued to be followed till this day. With only a few exceptions (each with its own explanation), it holds true that regardless of dedication, material, or period of construction, temples in Kanchi all orient towards the city's main road. To give just a few examples, situated immediately to the east of the main road, the Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ and Mukteśvara temples face west. Just a few blocks west of the road, the Kacchapeśvara and Amareśvara temples face east. The difference in orientation is determined entirely by placement, not deity of dedication or another factor. Whereas the Maṇikaṇṭheśvara temple (dedicated to Śiva) faces west, the Pāṇḍavadūta Perumāḷ temple (dedicated to Viṣṇu) faces east.

Where exceptions arise, the explanations can have to do with the dedication to a deity that is not Śiva or Viṣṇu, the temple's recent date, or its location in an area that

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was not originally part of Kanchi. For example, the goddess temple of Bhadrakāḷī Ammaṉ and two temples for Karukkiṉil Amarntavaḷ face directly north, the direction traditionally associated with the goddess. The east-facing Śiva temples of Cāntālīśvara and Puṇyakoṭīśvara can be explained by their location in the southern part of former Attiyūr, which did not become part of Kanchi until after they were established.

It is significant that before my research the pattern of orientation towards the road had never been noticed in scholarship. In the dense tangle of Kanchi's urban landscape, it is not possible to see it from the ground. Nevertheless, certain clues alerted me that orientation in Kanchi might be worth paying close attention to, beyond my usual process of documenting temples. Some of the older priests remarked that in Kanchi, temples were connected, or that the gods saw eye to eye. As I walked through the city, it seemed as though the temples were somehow responding to each other, that the gods were looking out across space at other gods, or at something in between. I found that when I approached a temple for the first time, I could predict which direction it would face. However, the pattern only became clear when I placed the temples on a map.

By the close of the Chola period, temples lay at every juncture. They demarcated the city's centers and peripheries. They pointed to avenues, hydraulic features, and royal establishments. They also fostered vibrant circuits of mobility and exchange.

Ambitious Extensions

Kanchi's Chola-era main road did not end at the city limits. Instead, it connected Kanchi with a network of suburban temple-sites both north and south of the city. The placement of these temples—or "emplacement," to use Leslie Orr's apt term—marks out pilgrimage routes that wove otherwise discrete villages together.[16] As devotees traveled along this and other pathways, they made donations to the gods in each place they visited. These gifts are recorded in inscriptions on the temple walls. The pious donations and their remembrance enabled temple life to continue and ritual culture to thrive across the region.

It is likely that many pilgrimage routes and sacred grounds are more ancient than the structures of temples, just like the ideas, narratives, legends, and histories contained in a manuscript are often older than the physical book. The presence of a temple or a text marks a point in time when the ideas and practices it contains were coalesced into a unified form. That form was not singular or static, but subject to continuous transformation, renovation, or interpolation over time. The question of how old a temple is, or when—precisely—a temple was established, can be as difficult to answer as asking the same questions of a text. However, architectural and

16 Leslie Orr persuasively employed this term during fieldwork in *The Archaeology of Bhakti* workshop, 2014.

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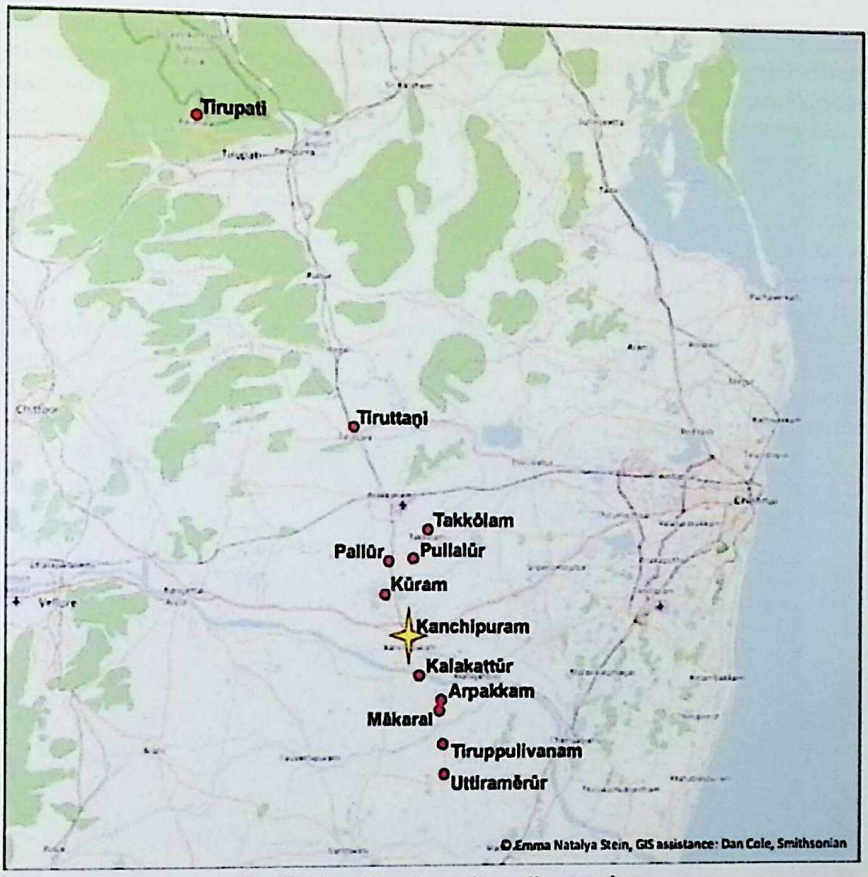

Fig. 22: Sites along the main road's extension.

sculptural style, material, and techniques of carving, as well as dated inscriptions, help us establish a relative chronology for at least portions of a single temple, a complex, or across a broader sacred landscape.

Zooming out from Kanchi city to that larger landscape, we find a series of sites situated directly along the extension of the main road (figure 22). Each of the sites marked on the map is a village that contains at least one large-scale temple that was built during the Chola era, between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. Inscriptions and architectural style make the dating of these particular temples relatively precise. At each site, travelers found communities that maintained the suburban temples and that were also responsible for cultivating the surrounding paddy and agricultural lands. For a royal procession from the city, each stop gave opportunities not only for rest and ritual, but also for diplomatic relations with these areas (Orr 2004, 437-470).

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While processional pathways are subject to change over time, some have endured for centuries. Records of these pathways come to us through scattered mentions in inscriptions.

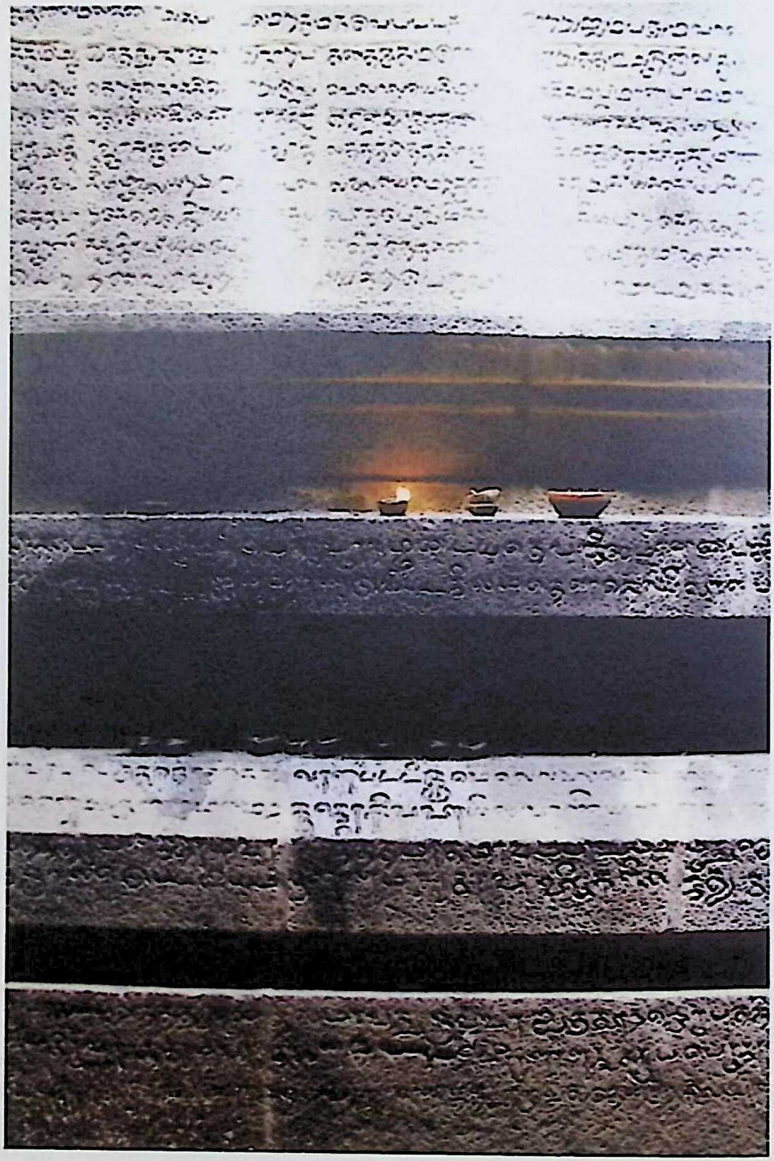

Fig. 23: Inscriptions on Ulakaḷanta Perumāḷ temple, Kanchi.

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In Tamil Nadu, inscriptions are typically carved along the walls of stone temples or onto stone slabs, or else they are incised into copper plates. They serve primarily to document legal determinations concerning temple property, and they record pious donations, such as supplies and lamps, as well as divine bronze sculptures, which were offered to the temple's gods (figure 23).

Through the epigraphic record and continued lived practice, the relationship between Kanchi and Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, at the northern extent of the road, emerges as a particularly ancient connection. Processions and pilgrims still regularly traverse the one hundred-kilometer distance between the two places. In her useful study of the multi-temple town of Tiruttaṇi, about half way between Kanchi and Tirupati, Valérie Gillet mentions two eleventh-century inscriptions on the Vīraṭṭāṉeśvara temple that record funding for feeding pilgrims coming from and going to Tirupati, precisely along the Kanchi extension road (Gillet 2016). These two records indicate that the Tirupati road was already a significant pilgrimage route by the eleventh century, when the inscriptions were commissioned.

Fig. 25: Village deity procession in Kanchi.

The Chola's road through Kanchi to Tirupati was perhaps the most bustling avenue around the year 1000, but it was not the only way to access Kanchi. The numerous temple-sites that surround the city plot out roads that extend in all four directions. Many of these places are little more than minor villages today. However, the presence of large-scale stone temples covered in donor inscriptions indicates that the villages were once prosperous places with enough resources to support the regular

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comings and goings of travelers. Processions brought the urban gods to the villages, and the village gods also came to see the city (figure 25).

Just like the places along the road to Tirupati, the temple-sites elsewhere in the hinterland served as rest stops for travelers and political nodes for rulers (figure 26). Some sites stand out as especially important. For example, a temple on the road from Kanchi to the eastern seacoast stands in the now tiny village of Tirumukkūṭal. This temple sits dramatically on the southern banks of a confluence of three rivers, which are now dry (figure 27). I have argued elsewhere that the drying of the rivers contributed to the gradual decline of places around Kanchi that thrived in earlier periods (Stein forthcoming). Little-Kanchi and Tirumukkūṭal retain a strong connection through Vaiṣṇava devotional circuits today, with an annual procession that brings the bronze icon of Varadarāja Perumāḷ to Tirumukkūṭal for *pūjā*.[17]

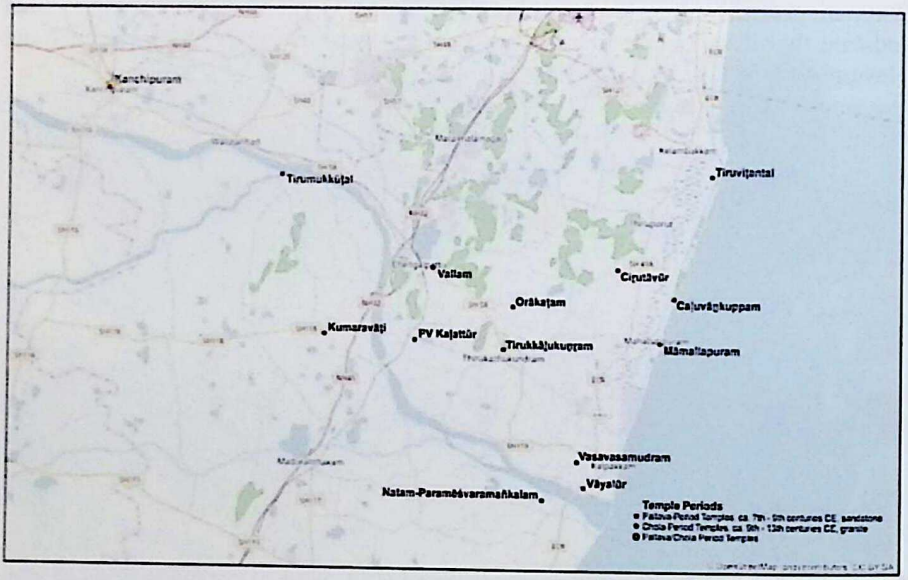

Fig. 26: Temple sites east of Kanchi.

Integration

Kanchi's central road holds a prize of place within the city. It functions as a point of orientation for all temples in the city, it directs visitors into and out of the city, and in the past, it led directly to what was a palace complex. The road remains a constant bustle of traffic and shopping, as well as a great artery of travel. This road and the four Rāja Vītis preserve a sense of grandeur, the *rājamārgas* so eloquently described in literature (figure 29).

17 In January 2020, Ute Hüsken participated in this annual festival.

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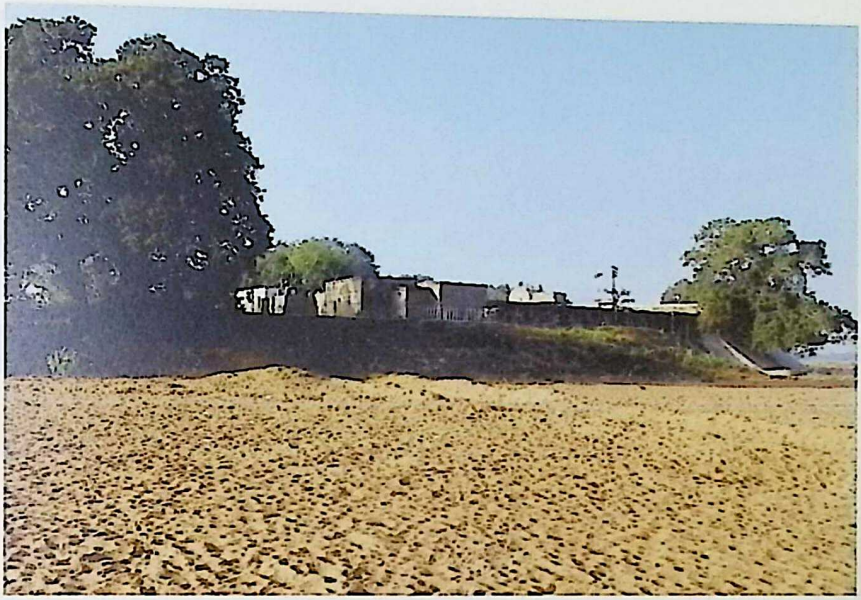

Fig. 27: Veṅkaṭeśvara temple, Tirumukkūṭal.

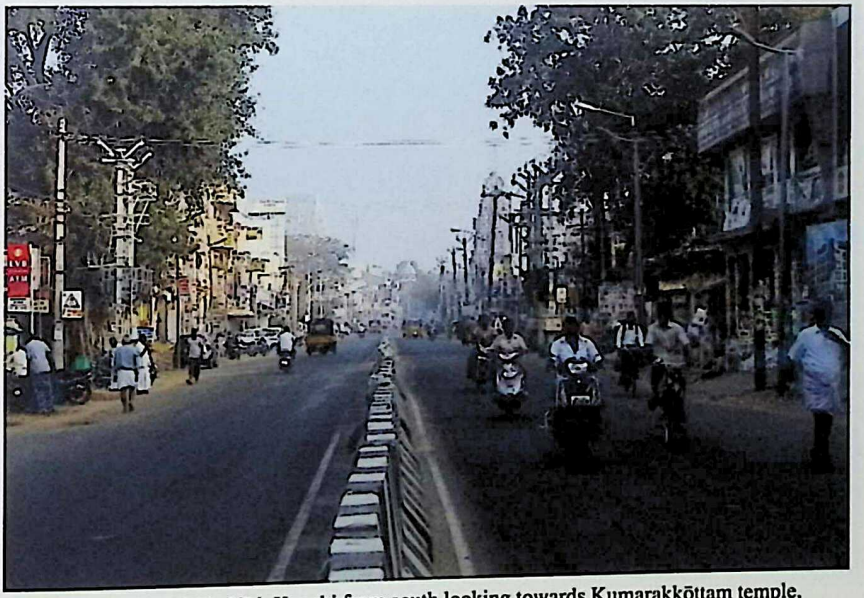

Fig. 29: West Rāja Vīti, Kanchi from south looking towards Kumarakkōṭṭam temple, Sankaracharya *maṭha*, and Ekāmbaranātha temple.

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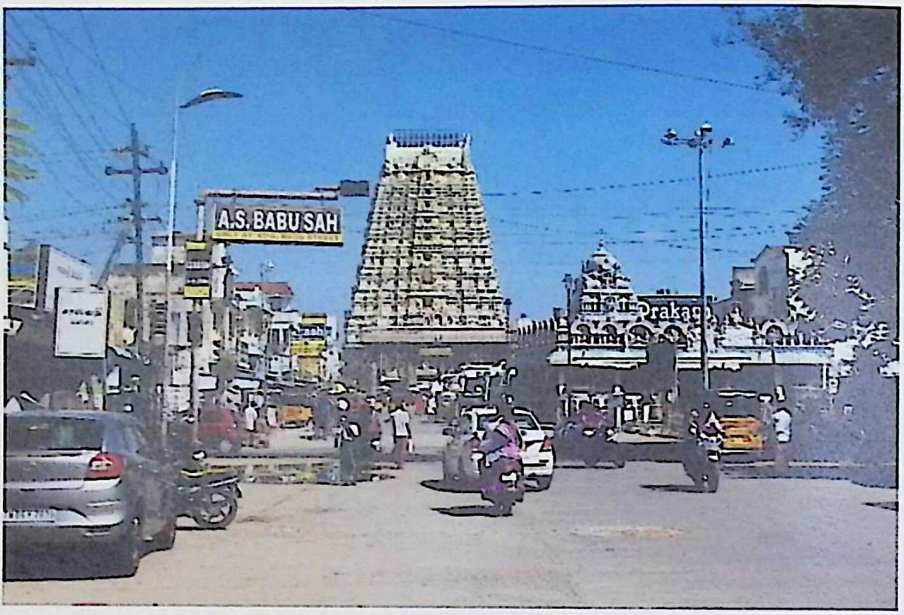

Fig. 30: Ekāmbaranātha Sannadhi Street, Kanchi.

Elsewhere in the city, other roads have very different characters. On the Ekāmbaranātha temple's Sannadhi Street, individual devotees and groups of pilgrims arrive in chartered tour busses, cars, or other motor vehicles (figure 30). Others arrive on foot after long journeys. They stretch and gaze awestruck at the towering southern *gopura*. Soon they walk up the street, past the sari shops and sweet sellers, to enter through the towering exterior gates and into the sprawling campus that today makes up the temple (figure 31). Once inside Ekāmbaranātha and the other complexes that pepper the urban landscape, they crowd through constricted aisles and strain to catch a glimpse of the city's many gods.

At the large temples in the center of town, there is often devotional music, the buzz of the resident priests chanting *mantras* and ringing bells, the sounds of water and other sacred substances splashing to the floor, the scrape of whisk brooms quick to the chase. In Kanchi, ritual can be colorful and constant (figure 32). In the evening, temples large and small become places for communities including city residents and visitors to gather. Interspersed with gardens and sheltered seating areas, the larger complexes provide the only open spaces in the city center, and people take full advantage of them (figure 33).

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Fig. 31: Ekāmbaranātha temple, Kanchi.

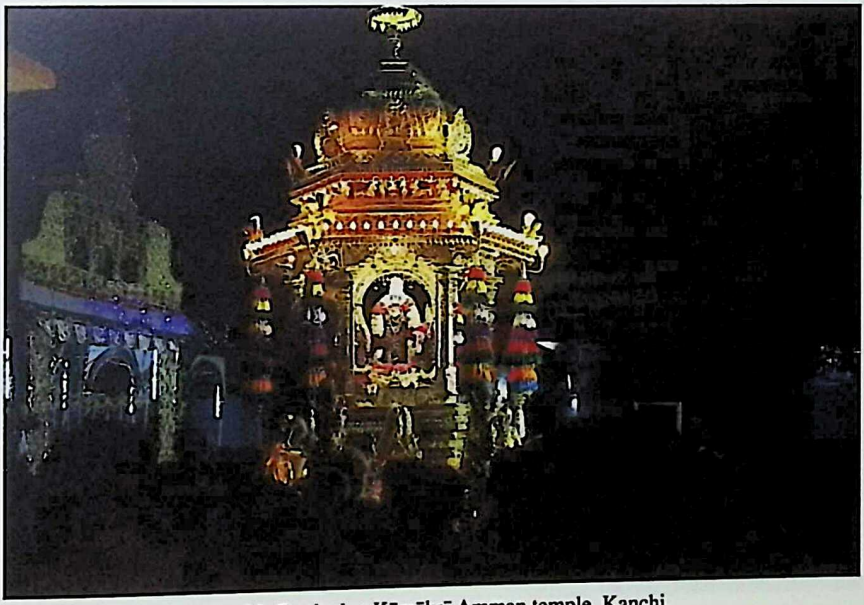

Fig. 32: Festival at Kāmākṣī Amman temple, Kanchi.

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Fig. 33: Evening at Kāmākṣī Amman temple, Kanchi.

Fig. 34: Tirukkālīśvara temple, Tirukkālimēṭu.

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Back on Railway Road on the eastern side of the city, at six o'clock in the morning Kanchi is not a temple town but a market town. Lorries piled high with produce rattle in from the agrarian areas. The vehicles also carry day workers wearing mint-green *vēṣṭis* and hauling hemp bags overflowing with all the staples of South Indian cooking—coriander, carrots, onions, and a wide assortment of gourds. We can imagine a similar, unmotorized scene playing out in the year 1000, though the bags would not have contained tomatoes, which came to India with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Railway Road is its own distinct kind of enclave. The market at the road's southern end whirls throughout the morning and then slows in the midday heat. At the northern end is the railway station, and about midway up the road is Kanchi's hospital.

Shortly before six each morning, a contingent of young children and assorted other people turns east off Railway Road opposite the hospital—just south of the gateway to Māmallaṉ Nagar—and slaloms their way down a buffalo-dung smattered path. Nicely paved, this road leads not to a temple but to a sportsground with an Olympic sized swimming pool. While the swimmers practice, other Kanchi residents walk briskly around the vast racetrack as the sun begins to show its face. These are local people. They typically do their daily worship at the smaller temples near to their homes or on their way from place to place. For the most part, they enter Kanchi's destination temple complexes, such as Kāmākṣī Ammaṉ or Varadarāja Perumāḷ, only on major festivals. Different temples in the city are important to different people for their own individual reasons. While one person may select a temple for worship because of proximity to home or office, another may specifically seek that same temple out from afar because their family has been devoted to its deity for many generations. Other people may visit a temple on occasion because its deity is propitious for a particular life event, such as childbirth. Still others may make a tour of all the Viṣṇu temples in the city, or all those associated with the devotional hymns compiled in the *divyaprabandham* (Vaiṣṇava) or *Tēvāram* (Śaiva) anthologies.

For residents of the village of Tirukkālimēṭu, on the outskirts of Kanchi where we began this essay, the Śiva temple of Tirukkālīśvara is just their locally zoned shrine. Like many ancient monuments in the area of the Kaveri river, it functions as a place for both individual worship and communal gathering. The temple is loosely surrounded by paddy and cattle, and approached by a dirt road. Particularly in the evenings and especially on the festival of *pradoṣa*, Tirukkālīśvara becomes a community center where people arrive not only to have auspicious sight (*darśana*) of the gods but also to converse with, and seek advice from, the single priest who diligently maintains the temple. *Pradoṣa* is a bi-monthly lunar festival, during which it is considered particularly auspicious to worship Śiva during the hours just before and after sundown. On these days, Kanchi is ablaze with rituals.

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Fig. 35: Tirukkālīśvara temple, Tirukkālimēṭu.

On one such evening, just as many visitors were preparing to leave from Tirukkālīśvara, heavy rains began to pour. Not wanting to walk through the dark and muddy streets back home or into the city, we all remained together to wait out the rain. We sat in the appended western *maṇḍapa* that sheltered devotees in earlier centuries, gossiping and watching the children run through the pillared hall.

At the same time as it is a local place of worship, Tirukkālīśvara is part of a more widespread temple network. In addition to its association with the *Tēvāram*, it shares certain patterns in its architecture, relief carvings, and sculptural program with temples both in Kanchi and northern Tamil Nadu, as well as in the southern Chola heartland of the Kaveri region. Despite its relatively remote location well outside Kanchi's urban core, visitors to the city sometimes include Tirukkālīśvara in their pilgrimage circuit because it was sanctified by Campantar (hymn 3.65), and because it contains a *liṅga* believed to be *svayambhū* (self-born).

The temple itself is a west-facing monument built fully of stone. The structure retains its original *devakoṣṭha* (niche) icons, and the top of its bulbous stone *śikhara* (roof) is just visible from outside the outer *prākāra* (enclosure) that subsumes the structure. The Tirukkālīśvara, Sīteśvara, and Paṇāmuṭīśvara temples in Kanchi all have the same type of *śikhara*. Aside from this enclosure and one more *prākāra* to mark the boundary of the sacred space, the Tirukkālīśvara temple has had few further additions or expansions, leaving the original form nicely preserved (figure 34).

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In Sanskrit architectural terminology, the *vimāna* (main shrine) and *ardhamaṇḍapa* (vestibule) stand on a stately *pādabandha-adhiṣṭhāna* (series of basal mouldings) over an exposed *upapīṭha* (platform), with a particularly lovely Nandi gazing into the sanctum in perpetual adoration (figure 35). The *devakoṣṭhas* (niches) feature a standard Chola-era program of Durgā and Brahmā (north), Liṅgodbhavamūrti (east), and Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Gaṇeśa (south).

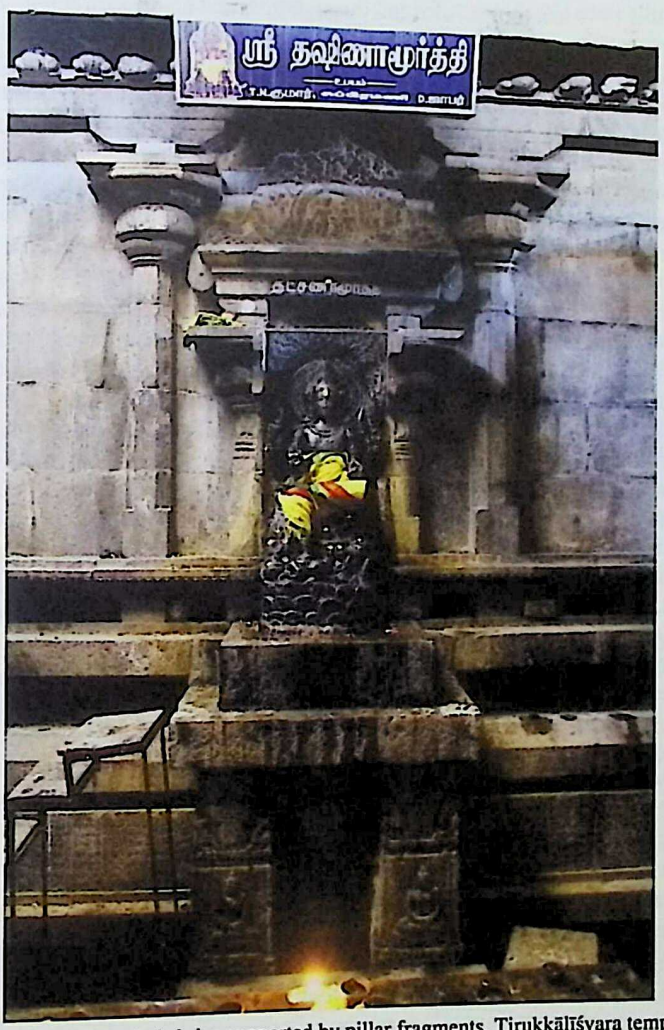

Fig. 36: Dakṣiṇāmūrti shrine supported by pillar fragments, Tirukkālīśvara temple.

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At Tirukkālīśvara, the format of the walls can be compared with the Umāmaheśvara temple at Kōṉērirājapuram in the Kaveri region. Kanchi's Karukkiṉil Amarntavaḷ temple also uses the same pilaster forms, but its wall pattern, projections, and basement mouldings beneath the *devakoṣṭhas* are instead closer to the Siddhanātha temple at Tirunaraiyūr in the Kaveri area. The tenth-century date of all these sites re-confirms the similar dating for Tirukkālīśvara and connects it with an even wider temple network that was forged through a shared architectural language.

Throughout Tamil Nadu, urbanization took place principally through the recognition of villages loosely grouped together as single administrative units (Heitzman 1987, 817). The recognition was often officially marked by the construction of a stone temple (or, more often, the conversion of part or all of the local shrine from brick to stone) and the appointment of a lineage of brahmins responsible for its maintenance (Heitzman 1987; Veluthat 2009). By the date of the first noticed inscription (ca. 1018 CE), the temple of Tirukkāraikkāṭu-Mahādēvar (Tirukkālīśvara) was already part of Kaccippēṭu (Kanchipuram) but the temple's construction predates the inscription by some number of years (Mahalingam 1989, 300, Cg.-1185).

The mention of a *maṭha* (monastery) in one of the temple's inscriptions indicates that Tirukkālimēṭu was a place of higher learning, with a population that included a significant number of brahmins (Mahalingam 1989, 301, Cg.-1186). There would have been no shortage of support for the construction and maintenance of the temple. What resulted was an impressive monument that could mark the occasion of Tirukkālimēṭu village being incorporated into Kanchi municipality, though the recorded inscriptions do not mention this specifically.

This temple and the village in which it is situated also holds a special place in Kanchi's lived local history. Recall that the suffix *-mēṭu* refers to high society. There is a tradition that the Cholas had a palace in Tirukkālimēṭu. In the absence of further evidence, it is only possible to speculate that some portion of the royal family may have had a residence there, where the people were fewer, the soil was fertile, and the air was fresh. Nevertheless, inscriptions help us flesh out a picture of the area, and the resident society emerges as elite. The mention of a *maṭha* (monastery) in the village, called Tirukāraikkāṭṭumaṭam, is contained within an eight-line inscription that wraps around the walls of the main shrine, dated to the sixteenth regnal year of Rājendra Chola (ca. 1028 CE) (Mahalingam 1989, 301, Cg.-1186). The inscription records that the *sabhās* (defined as brahmin councils, assemblies of learned men, village leaders) of five settlements entered into an agreement with the head of the *maṭha*, in which their villages would supply paddy to the temple instead of paying interest on a sum of gold that the temple had granted to them. The consortium of *sabhās* also agreed to certain other responsibilities, such as supplying meals to the workers who had to come to their respective villages in order to collect the paddy and transport it back to Tirukkālimēṭu—we might think here of the workers in green *vēṣṭis* who come to man Kanchi's markets, bringing supplies of food for the city. The inscription also records that another settlement (*ūr*) agreed to similar terms. Twenty

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years later, another inscription tells us that an officer communicated a royal Chola order assigning certain *śivabrāhmaṇas* (temple priests) the responsibility of maintaining the paddy supplied by those same five *sabhās*, which shows that the agreement was sustained. The royal nature of the order indicates that Tirukkālimēṭu was within the Chola's dominion, as was the rest of Kanchi by this point in time.[18]

Other inscriptions on the Tirukkālīśvara temple reveal that Tirukkālimēṭu was a powerful place, responsible for alliances and tax agreements with numerous surrounding settlements, and that it was the overseer of water distribution for irrigating the all-important paddy fields. Like many temples, it was also in possession of jewels and other valuables. An inscription of indeterminate date records that some of the temple's jewels and property was stolen and later recovered (Mahalingam 1989, 303, Cg.-1190). It specifies that the theft took place on the occasion of the stone temple's construction, when a certain Gaṇapatidēvan (Kākatīya Gaṇapati) was visiting. Since this king postdates the earliest inscriptions on the temple, as well as the architectural style, the inscription in question must refer to a repair or renovation to the temple rather than its initial construction.[19] The record in fact goes on to mention repairs that were made possible by the funds from the recovered valuables—the shrines for Gaṇeśa (Iḷayapiḷḷaiyār) and the saint Kampavanīśvara in the circumambulatory pathway (*tirunaṭai-māḷikai*) were fixed up.

These records further reveal that Tirukkālīśvara has been a Śaiva temple since its inception, despite another local tradition that a Buddhist center existed in Tirukkālimēṭu. Kanchi has a long and important Buddhist history that is well documented in literary works ranging from the acclaimed travel memoirs of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (seventh century), to the Tamil epic *Maṇimēkalai* (probably sixth century), to the Sanskrit *Mattavilāsa Prahasana*, a farcical drama by the Pallava king Mahendravarman I (ca. 580–630 CE) (Monius 2001; Bhatt and Lockwood 1981). There is much physical evidence to support the texts—large-scale stone sculptures of the Buddha that date variously to the sixth through twelfth century can be discovered throughout the city and in a constellation of nearby villages. While Tirukkālimēṭu certainly could have been home to Buddhists and even a *vihāra* (Buddhist monastery), I believe the tradition that it was a Buddhist place derives from two sixteenth-century pillar fragments carved with Buddha images that are now in the Tirukkālīśvara temple's inner *prākāra*. These fragments presently support the extended shrine for the form of Śiva as teacher, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, but they originally would have been part of the enclosure that subsumes the temple (figure 36). Most likely, these Buddhas are not in fact Buddhas but avatars of Viṣṇu. Such Vaiṣṇava

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18 Inscriptions in Kanchi starting in ca. 922 CE are dated in the regnal years of the ruling Chola king, and Kanchi is described as the center of Jayankonda-*chola*-mandalam, the Chola's northern precincts that had Kanchi as its capital. The earliest recorded inscriptions with Chola dates are on pillars in the *maṇḍapa* of the Kailāsanātha temple, followed by an inscription on the Yathoktakārī temple (Mahalingam 1989, 120, 153).

19 Kākatīya Gaṇapati was active ca. 1199–1262.

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images can be found at the (Śaiva) Kacchapeśvara temple, still in their original positions. At Kacchapeśvara, each pillar holds a different avatar carved multiple times. At Tirukkālīśvara, the Vaiṣṇava affiliation is made all the more explicit by the presence of Viṣṇu on the adjacent pillar face at the same level as the Buddha (figure 38).

Fig. 38: Pillar fragment in Tirukkālīśvara temple, Tirukkālimēṭu.

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Fig. 39: Yogis at Tirukkālīśvara temple.

Fig. 40: *Liṅga* worship, Tirukkālīśvara temple, Tirukkālimēṭu.

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On the main body of the temple, several of Tirukkālīśvara's decorative panels contain tiny scenes that show ascetics in yogic postures or devotees worshipping *liṅgas*. These images are positioned along the basement and superstructure mouldings, as well as above the niches (figure 39-40). Similar images of *liṅga* worship similarly appear in the sculptural programs of the Tirumēr̲r̲aḷinātha and Puṇyakoṭīśvara temples in Kanchi, as well as in a number of temples in the Kaveri area. While they could have been included merely for decoration, it is more likely that their presence has to do with the site's association with local *bhakti*.[20] Like Tirukkālīśvara, Tirumēr̲r̲aḷinātha is a *Tēvāram* site, sung by Appar and Cuntarar (4.43 and 7.21 respectively). It may be these two saints who are depicted on the east wall of the eleventh-century *ardhamaṇḍapa*, just flanking the entrance to the inner sanctum (figure 44). At Tirumēr̲r̲aḷinātha, as if to reinforce the temple's association with the Tamil saints, a small shrine for Campantar has been built at the opposite end of the street, facing west towards the temple. The structure (of unknown date) was completely dismantled and rebuilt during 2014–16, which shows that the site continues to be a focus of devotion.

Campantar's long hymn to the Lord who dwells in Tirukkālimēṭu (here called *Ner̲ikkāraikkātu*) is worth quoting in full for its beauty and its repeated trope describing Kanchi as a "city full of bustle."

> In Kacci which has sound that is produced at the end of the world and has beautiful storeys near which the clouds come close.
> Civan̲ in ner̲ikkāraikkāṭu which has natural tanks full of water in which there are flowers,
> having on one half a young lady on whose breasts the bodice adheres,
> holding in the opalm a battle-axe fixed for warfare,
> will adorn himself with white sacred ash.
> In the great and fertile city of Kacci in whose streets cars move slowly.
> Civan̲ in ner̲ikkāraikkātu which has natural tanks having flowers, in which water spreads,
> has a beautiful neck which is like the sable cloud,
> dwells in the scorched cremation ground
> holding a broken skull,
> wanders from village to village, to receive alms,
> dresses in a skin flayed from a spotted deer.
> The Lord in ner̲ikkāraikkaṭu in Kacci of great bustle
> had Umai who has a waist like the creeper, as one half,
> wore on the cool jaṭai a crescent with a river,
> became eminent by adorning himself with dancing cobras,
> adorned his flag with the form of a bull,
> wore bones and sacred ash

20 Kaimal (1995) explores the implications of similar figures.

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Fig. 44: Saints? Tirumēr<u>r</u>aḷinātha Temple, Kanchi.

as ornaments on his chest which is like the mountain.
The jaṭai on which the crescent stays to hang on the nape,
dancing along with the pūtaṅkaḷ which sings vētam,
holding a battle-axe,
Civan<u></u> in ne<u>r</u>ikkāraikkaṭu situated in Kacci of bustle which fills the city,
the swarms of bees get disgusted with the honey in the flowers and lay hold of the honey dripping from the sweet fruits.
The god who is full of grace and gave moral instruction long ago,

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sitting under a banyan tree,
fixing the bow-string of a killing cobra in a bow which does not decrease in its cruelty.
The Lord who remained being unmoved at the sight of all the three cities of the enemies who were destroyed by being burnt,
is the Lord in neṟikkāraikkāṭu in Kacci of great bustle.
The celestials make obeisance by bowing to the feet of many flowers,
the spotless god who destroyed by discharging an arrow in an instant which is the time measure of the finger, all the three cities of the strong avuṇar who had no good nature
is in neṟikkāraikkāṭu in Kacci of great bustle.
The Lord who has a bull and a jaṭai which bears a cruel cobra that lives in the anthill, beautifying konṟai flowers, datura flowers, water which is moving and never ceases from dashing, and a crescent,
has on one half a lady,
has one eye on the forehead.
Civaṉ has a nature of fixing his small toe in the beautiful mountain on the King of beautiful ilaṅkai surrounded by the surging ocean,
His punishment was also good to the arakkaṉ.
He is the god in neṟikkāraikkāṭu in Kacci of great bustle and long beautiful streets surrounded by a wall of fortification, surrounding fields and a deep moat.
To Civaṉ the food is the poison which rose in the roaring sea,
will receive alms in the broken skull,
will adorn as ornament the bones of dead persons,
the god who wore as ornament a beautiful shell of a tortoise along with a cobra with lines on it,
and who shot up high as a rising column of fire, so that the two,
Māl and Ayaṉ could not know him.
The words spoken by camaṇar who are low in character, and by buddhists who wander doing mischief and covering their bodies with an upper cloth,
do not contain any truth.
The Lord who placed on one half of his body which is like a mountain a lady on whose tresses of hair bees hum loudly,
Singing songs of benediction at the feet of the Lord who has on his holy body a lady and who dwells in neṟikkāraikkātu of Kacci of great bustle is pleasing to the eye.
Those who are able to recite the Tamiḻ verses combined with melody-types composed by ñāṉacampantaṉ well-versed in Tamiḻ who is a native of Kāḻi which has cool gardens, will remain in the superior world of Civalokam.
In Kacci which has sound that is produced at the end of the world and has beautiful storeys near which the clouds come close.[21]

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21 Translation by V.M. Subramanya Ayyar (see Chevillard and Sarma 2007).

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Fig. 45: Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara temple, Kanchi.

Fig. 46: Chain motif on central moulding, Kailāsanātha temple, Kanchi.

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Fig. 47: Chain motif on pilaster, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara temple, Kanchi.

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Tirukkālīśvara's association with the *Tēvāram* makes it possible to speculate that the temple was established or more likely converted from brick to stone through local rather than royal sponsorship, perhaps through collective donations.[22] In a similar enclave on the western border of the city, another temple likely had a trajectory of development that parallels that of Tirukkālīśvara. Overlooking a picturesque pond just meters away from the Pallava's great Kailāsanātha temple, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara is a shrine that has undergone multiple reincarnations (figure 45). It was originally a humble shrine sung by Saint Cuntarar (hymn 7.10), yet it gained attention during the Chola period. The temple was rebuilt in stone in the late eleventh century, and its walls were inscribed with two records concerning royal allocations of land and property (Mahalingam 1989, 156-57, Cg.-640 and 157, Cg.-641).

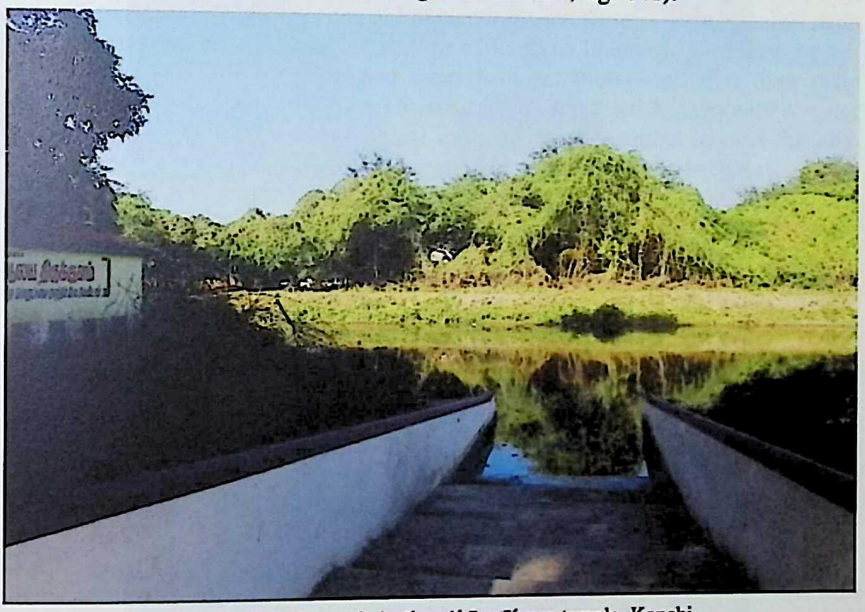

Fig. 48: Temple pond, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara temple, Kanchi.

While the Kailāsanātha temple gradually faded from prominence, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara may have become the preferred destination in western Kanchi for local devotees. Nevertheless, a relationship between the two temples was established and literally set in stone. Even if Kailāsanātha was already little used at the time of its neighbor's construction, the Pallava temple seems to have provided a roster of local motifs that the later shrine incorporated. As one of several examples, a motif of interlocking chains that encircles the entire base of the Kailāsanātha is employed for decoration on Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara (figure 46-47). I have not seen this motif on any

22 For exploration of this topic, see the essays in Schmid and Francis 2016.

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other Chola-period temples, in northern or southern Tamil Nadu, in person or in print. Similarly, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara harkens back to other Pallava monuments outside of Kanchi city. The motif depicting the foaming cosmic ocean of bliss along the pilasters, complete with tiny figures emerging, recalls the offering pedestals at Māmallapuram's Shore Temple (ca. 700–725 CE), as well as the abundant ornamental carvings on the beautiful Sundaravarada Perumāḷ temple at Uttiramērūr (ninth century). Perhaps these motifs are used at Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara as a kind of act of reverence to the Pallava monuments.

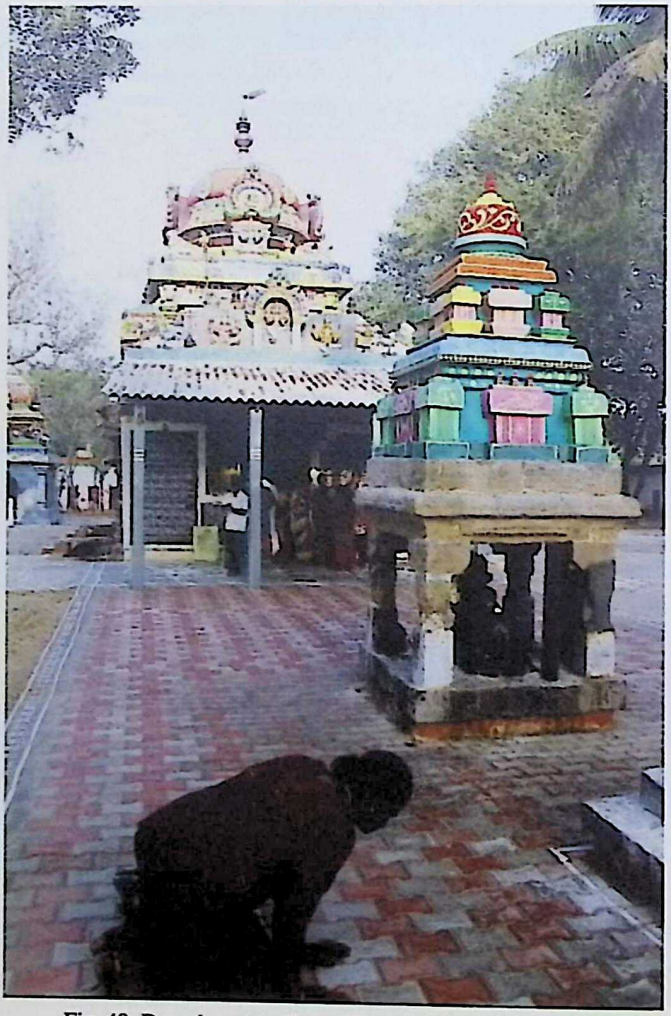

Fig. 49: Devotion at Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara temple, Kanchi.

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This temple is in a quiet part of town, much quieter than Tirukkālimēṭu, and it has not been studied by scholars. However, Aṉēkataṅkāvatīśvara continues to hold importance for at least some members of Kanchi's society. After a period of total disrepair, in 2015 the temple was completely renovated. Paint was peeled from the walls, the superstructure was repaired and repainted in dayglow multicolor, and the pond was cleaned and widened (figure 48-49). Birds and other wildlife returned to the water, and the structure of the temple again shone through. With the elements exposed, so too shone the temple's participation in a wider network of art and devotion inside—and beyond—the city of Kanchi.

Kanchi's temples and urban structure have developed cyclically, with some shrines falling out of devotion while others come to the fore. In the center of the city, a structured urban landscape emerged that coordinated temples with a central main road, the more-than proverbial *rājamārga* of Sanskrit literature. With few exceptions, temples in Kanchi positioned their main entrances—and thus their main deities—to face towards this road. The road itself connected Kanchi with a wider network of commercial and devotional exchange that extended beyond the city. Temple sites were established not only north and south of Kanchi, but also to its east and west. Connected through patterns of inscriptions, architectural forms, and legendary histories, these temples broadened the scope of the city. At the same time, temples in village areas that were incorporated into Kanchi maintained a level of autonomy that still can be felt today. In their own quiet way, temples like Tirukkālīśvara in the village of Tirukkālimēṭu have continuously contributed to Kanchi's vibrant urban life.

Abbreviations

ARE *Annual Reports on Epigraphy*
EI *Epigraphia Indica*
IAR *Indian Archaeology: A Review*
SII *South Indian Inscriptions*

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For many centuries, Hindu temples and shrines have been of great importance to South Indian religious, social and political life. Aside from being places of worship, they are also pilgrimage destinations, centres of learning, political hotspots, and foci of economic activities. In these temples, not only the human and the divine interact, but they are also meeting places of different members of the communities, be they local or coming from afar. Hindu temples do not exist in isolation, but stand in multiple relationships to other temples and sacred sites. They relate to each other in terms of architecture, ritual, or mythology, or on a conceptual level when particular sites are grouped together. Especially in urban centres, multiple temples representing different religious traditions may coexist within a shared sacred space. The current volume pays close attention to the connections between individual Hindu temples and the affiliated communities, be it within a particular place or on a trans-local level. These connections are described as "temple networks," a concept which instead of stable hierarchies and structures looks at nodal, multi-centred, and fluid systems, in which the connections in numerous fields of interaction are understood as dynamic processes.

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